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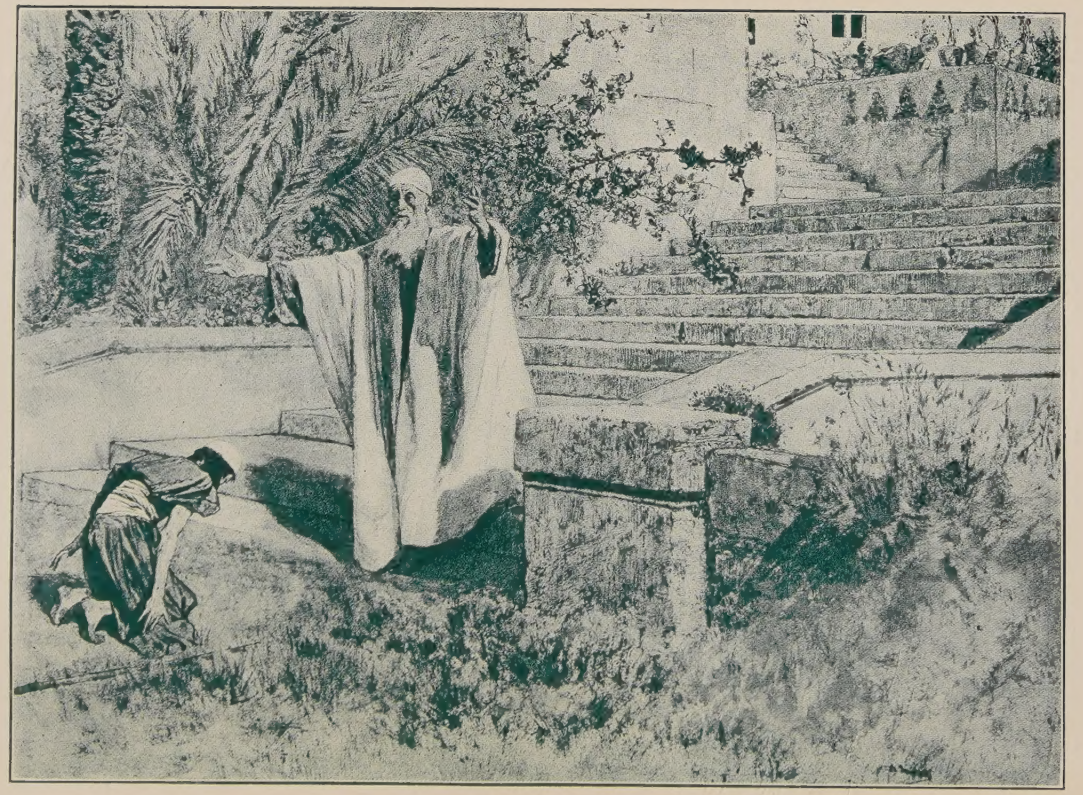

THE PRODIGAL SON (*DOMENICO MORELLI*)

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him."—Psalm 103.13

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TARBELL'S

TEACHERS' GUIDE

TO THE
INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS
IMPROVED UNIFORM COURSE
FOR 1929

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL VOLUME

MARTHA TARBELL, Ph.D.

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Selected by the International Sunday School Lesson Committee

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Jan. 3. Ephesians 1.3-14. Our Father's Gift.
Jan. 4. John 3.16-21. Our Father's Love.
Jan. 5. 1 John 3.1-8. Sonship with God.
Jan. 6. John 4.20-26. Our Approach to the Father.

II. Jan. 7. Romans 3.10-18. Sin as Transgression of Law.
Jan. 8. 1 John 5.13-21. Sin as Unrighteousness.
Jan. 9. Romans 6.15-23. The Wages of Sin.
Jan. 10. Exodus 34.1-9. God Forgives Sin.
Jan. 11. Proverbs 28.5-14. Sin should be Confessed.
Jan. 12. Amos 5.10-15. Sin should be Abhorred.
Jan. 13. Psalm 51.1-10. Prayer for Pardon.

III. Jan. 14. Romans 5.1-11. Christ the Saviour.
Jan. 15. Isaiah 35.1-10. Christ's Reign.
Jan. 16. John 1.35-42. The Lamb of God.
Jan. 17. Hebrews 1.1-9. An Exalted Saviour.
Jan. 18. 1 John 1.1-10. A Present Saviour.
Jan. 19. 1 Peter 1.3-12. Salvation by Grace.
Jan. 20. Isaiah 53.1-9. The Suffering Saviour.

IV. Jan. 21. Joel 2.28-32. The Holy Spirit Promised.
Jan. 22. Acts 2.1-6. The Coming of the Holy Spirit.
Jan. 23. Acts 19.1-7. Receiving the Holy Spirit.
Jan. 24. John 16.7-15. The Holy Spirit our Helper.
Jan. 25. Romans 8.26-30. The Holy Spirit Interceding.
Jan. 26. 1 Corinthians 12.1-11. Spiritual Gifts.
Jan. 27. John 14.25-31. The Holy Spirit our Comforter.

V. Jan. 28. Psalm 19.7-14. The Word of God.
Jan. 29. 2 Timothy 3.14-17. The Inspired Word.
Jan. 30. Matthew 4.1-11. Jesus and the Scriptures.
Jan. 31. 2 Peter 1.12-21. A Divine Guide.
Feb. 1. Psalm 1. Delight in the Scriptures
Feb. 2. Nehemiah 8.1-8. Teaching the Scriptures.
Feb. 3. Psalm 119.105-112. Light for Life's Pathway.

VI. Feb. 4. Jonah 3.1-10. The Nature of Repentance.
Feb. 5. Isaiah 1.10-17. The Necessity for Repentance.
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Feb. 7. Hebrews 11.1-5. The Nature of Faith.
Feb. 8. Hebrews 11.6-12. The Necessity for Faith.
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Feb. 12. Matthew 6.9-15. The Model Prayer.
Feb. 13. Luke 18.1-8. Persistency in Prayer.
Feb. 14. Luke 18.9-14. Humility in Prayer.
Feb. 15. Genesis 18.23-33. A Prayer of Abraham.
Feb. 16. Luke 22.39-46. A Prayer of Jesus.
Feb. 17. Psalm 121. The Divine Guardian.

VIII. Feb. 18. John 1.35-42. Peter's Growth Foretold.
Feb. 19. Matthew 16.13-20. Peter's Growth Realized.
Feb. 20. 2 Peter 3.14-18. Peter's Exhortation to Grow.
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Feb. 22. Phililemon 1.1-11. Growing in Love.
Feb. 23. Luke 2.40-52. How Jesus Grew.
Feb. 24. John 15.1-10. Growing in Faithfulness.

IX. Feb. 25. Matthew 16.13-20. The Church's One Foundation.
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Mar. 6. Ephesians 4.1-6. One Lord. one Faith, one Baptism.
Mar. 7. 1 Corinthians 11.23-29. The Lord's Supper.
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	Mar.	19.	2 Corinthians 9.6-15. STEWARDSHIP OF SUBSTANCE.
	Mar.	20.	Luke 10.25-37. STEWARDSHIP OF SERVICE.
	Mar.	21.	1 Timothy 6.11-19. THE RIGHT USE OF WEALTH.
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	July	25.	Daniel 2.36-45. Daniel Interpreting the King's Dream.
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	July	28.	Psalm 46. Jehovah our Refuge.
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Aug. 6. Daniel 6.16-23. In the Lions' Den.
Aug. 7. Daniel 2.8-18. The Courage of Daniel's Friends.
Aug. 8. Ezra 8.21-30. The Courage of Ezra.
Aug. 9. Acts 4.13-20. Courageous Witnessing for Christ.
Aug. 10. Ephesians 6.10-20. An Exhortation to Courage.
Aug. 11. Psalm 91.9-16. Security in Jehovah.

VII. Aug. 12. 2 Chronicles 36.14-21. Judah Taken Captive.
Aug. 13. Psalm 137.1-6. Judah Mourns in Babylon.
Aug. 14. Jeremiah 29.10-14. The Return Prophesied.
Aug. 15. Ezra 1.1-4. Cyrus Decrees the Return.
Aug. 16. Psalm 126.1-6. Rejoicing in Deliverance.
Aug. 17. Isaiah 35.1-10. Spiritual Restoration.
Aug. 18. Psalm 124. Jehovah a Deliverer.

VIII. Aug. 19. Ezra 3.1-7. The Altar Set Up.
Aug. 20. Ezra 3.8-13. The Temple Foundations Laid.
Aug. 21. Ezra 4.1-6. Opposition of Enemies.
Aug. 22. Ezra 6.6-13. Enemies Aiding Ezra.
Aug. 23. Ezra 6.14-22. The Temple Completed.
Aug. 24. Mark 11.11-18. The Purpose of the Temple.
Aug. 25. Psalm 122. Love for God's House.

IX. Aug. 26. Ezra 7.6-10. The Purpose of Ezra's Return.
Aug. 27. Ezra 7.12-22. The King's Aid.
Aug. 28. Ezra 8.21-23. Ezra's Prayer for Guidance.
Aug. 29. Ezra 8.31-36. Ezra's Arrival in Jerusalem.
Aug. 30. Ezra 9.5-15. Ezra's Prayer of Confession.
Aug. 31. Ezra 10.9-17. A Reformation Effected.
Sept. 1. Psalm 63.1-8. The Soul's Longing for God.

X. Sept. 2. Nehemiah 2.1-5. Nehemiah's Sadness and Request.
Sept. 3. Nehemiah 2.6-11. Nehemiah's Return to Jerusalem.
Sept. 4. Nehemiah 2.12-20. Inspection of the Wall.
Sept. 5. Nehemiah 4.15-23. Building under Difficulties.
Sept. 6. Nehemiah 5.14-19. Nehemiah's Unselfishness.
Sept. 7. Nehemiah 6.15—7:4. The Wall Completed.
Sept. 8. Psalm 85.1-7. The Favor of Jehovah.

XI. Sept. 9. Deuteronomy 31.9-13. Reading the Law Commanded.
Sept. 10. Joshua 8.30-35. Joshua Reading the Law.
Sept. 11. Nehemiah 8.1-6. Ezra Reading the Law.
Sept. 12. Nehemiah 8.8-12. Rejoicing in the Law.
Sept. 13. Luke 4.16-21. Jesus Reading the Law.
Sept. 14. Deuteronomy 6.1-9. Teaching the Law at Home.
Sept. 15. Psalm 119.97-104. Love for God's Law.

XII. Sept. 16. Malachi 1.6-14. Insincere Worship.
Sept. 17. Malachi 2.1-9. Wicked Priests Warned.
Sept. 18. Malachi 3.1-6. Purification Promised.
Sept. 19. Malachi 3.7-12. The Blessings of Tithing.
Sept. 20. Malachi 4.1-6. The End of the Wicked.
Sept. 21. Isaiah 2.1-4. A Warless World.
Sept. 22. Isaiah 11.1-9. The Age of Peace.

XIII. Sept. 23. Ezekiel 11.14-25. Ezekiel's Vision of the Restoration.
Sept. 24. Daniel 9.1-10. Daniel a Man of Prayer.
Sept. 25. Joshua 1.1-9. The Value of Courage.
Sept. 26. Jeremiah 29.10-14. The Restoration Promise.
Sept. 27. Ezra 6.13-18. The Temple Rebuilt.
Sept. 28. Psalm 19.7-14. The Excellency of the Law.
Sept. 29. Psalm 61. Confidence in God.

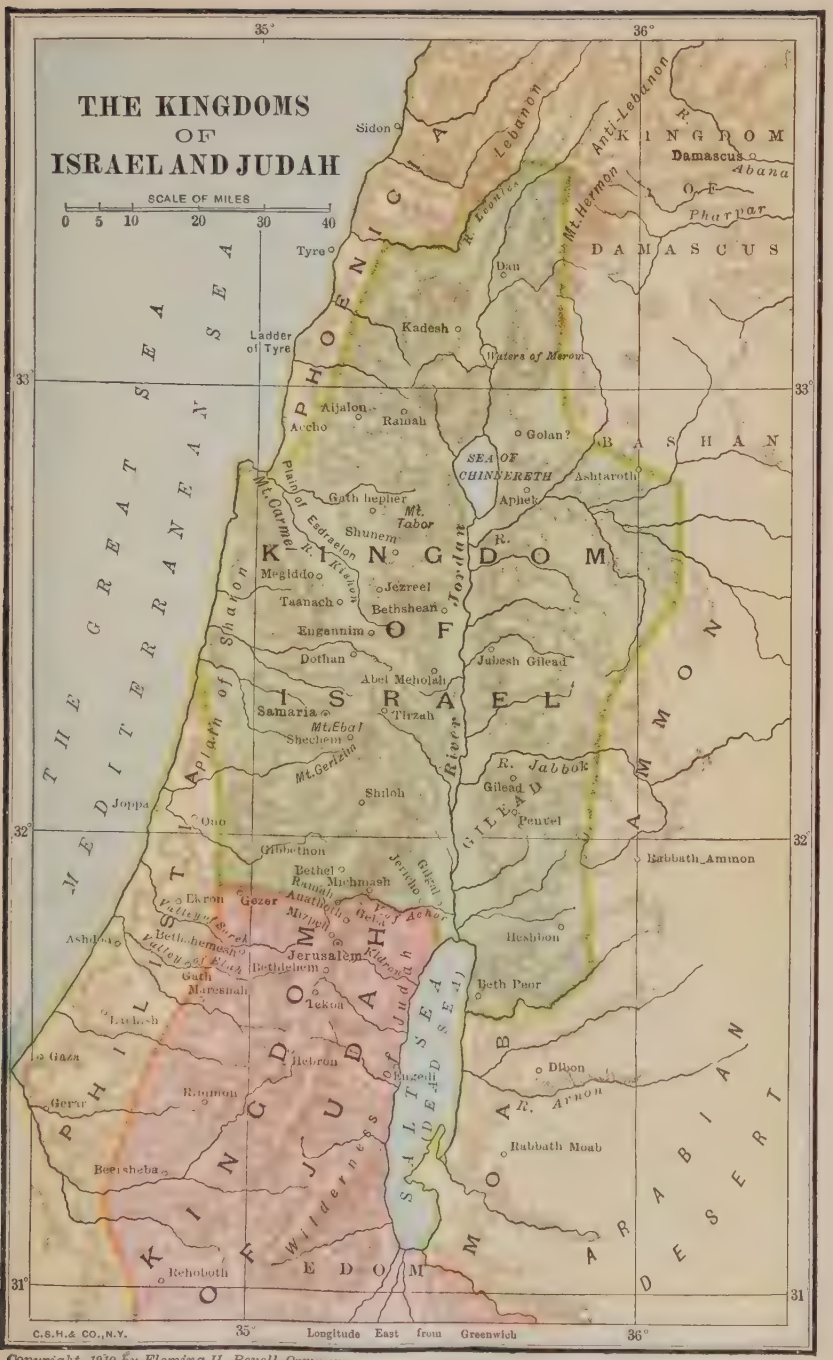
FOURTH QUARTER

I. Sept. 30. Mark 12.28-34. Love to God and Man Enjoined.
Oct. 1. James 2.14-17. Making Faith Valid.
Oct. 2. Philippians 2.1-11. Christian Socialmindedness.
Oct. 3. Colossians 3.12—4:1. Spiritualizing Social and Domestic Relations.
Oct. 4. Nehemiah 4.15-23. Human and Divine Co-operation.
Oct. 5. Matthew 19.16-22. Social Obligation Rejected.
Oct. 6. Psalm 40.5-10. Proclaiming the Glad Tidings.

II. Oct. 7. Daniel 1.8-13. Adventurous Religion.
Oct. 8. Daniel 1.14-21. Courageous Faith Rewarded.
Oct. 9. 1 Corinthians 9.19-27. Why Self-control?
Oct. 10. 1 Corinthians 10.23-33. Seeking the Good of Others.
Oct. 11. 1 Corinthians 6.12-20. The Consecration of Bodily Powers.
Oct. 12. Romans 14.13-23. Self-denial for the Sake of Others.
Oct. 13. Psalm 66.16-20. Personal Testimony and Praise.

III. Oct. 14. John 5.10-18. The Gospel of Work.
Oct. 15. 2 Thessalonians 3.6-15. The Idler Banned.
Oct. 16. Ephesians 4.25-32. Christian Conduct for Workers.
Oct. 17. Acts 20.24-35. The Work of a Faithful Minister.
Oct. 18. Luke 10.1-11. The Call for Laborers.

	Oct.	19.	Exodus 31.1-11. Inspired Workmen.
	Oct.	20.	Psalm 8. The Master-Workman.
IV.	Oct.	21.	Mark 2.15-22. Eating and Fasting.
	Oct.	22.	Mark 2.23-28. The Sabbath for Man.
	Oct.	23.	Mark 6.30-44. Rest and Diversion.
	Oct.	24.	John 2.1-11. Jesus a Wedding Guest.
	Oct.	25.	Daniel 5.1-6. Dissipation and Disaster.
	Oct.	26.	Isaiah 40.27-31. The Recovery of Strength
	Oct.	27.	Philippians 4.4-9. Precept and Example.
V.	Oct.	28.	Mark 12.1-2. The Abuse of Privilege.
	Oct.	29.	Mark 12.13-17. Our Debt to God and Country.
	Oct.	30.	Romans 13.1-10. Civic and Social Obligations.
	Oct.	31.	1 Peter 2.13-25. Duties and Privileges of Subjects.
	Nov.	1.	Acts 19.30-41. The Mob Spirit Suppressed by Law.
	Nov.	2.	John 19.1-11. Powers of Government Derived.
	Nov.	3.	Matthew 5.13-20. Jesus' Regard for Law.
VI.	Nov.	4.	Isaiah 2.1-11. Jehovah's Universal Reign.
	Nov.	5.	Acts 17.22-31. God of the Nations.
	Nov.	6.	John 4.15-26. No Racial Lines in the Kingdom.
	Nov.	7.	Isaiah 19.19-25. The Comity of Nations.
	Nov.	8.	Psalm 87. Kinship of the Nation.
	Nov.	9.	Acts 2.1-6. The Gospel in the Mother Tongue.
	Nov.	10.	Psalm 98. The Righteous Judge Acclaimed.
VII.	Nov.	11.	Acts 10.9-16. Overcoming Racial Antipathies.
	Nov.	12.	Acts 10.23-33. Christianity and the Races.
	Nov.	13.	Ruth 1.6-18. Home-making in a Foreign Land.
	Nov.	14.	John 4.5-14. Jesus and the Samaritan Woman.
	Nov.	15.	Romans 1.8-17. Our Debt to Alien Races.
	Nov.	16.	Acts 13.44-52. Racial Prejudice Rebuked.
	Nov.	17.	Ephesians 3.14-21. The Universal Spiritual Family.
VIII.	Nov.	18.	Jonah 1.1-10. Jonah's Disobedience.
	Nov.	19.	Jonah 3.1-10. The Conversion of the Ninevites.
	Nov.	20.	Jonah 4.1-11. A Parable of Divine Compassion.
	Nov.	21.	Acts 17.22-31. Religion a Universal Experience.
	Nov.	22.	Psalm 137. Patriots in an Alien Country.
	Nov.	23.	Ephesians 2.11-22. Fellow Citizens in the Family of God.
	Nov.	24.	Isaiah 55.1-7. God's Gift to All Peoples.
	Nov.	25.	Luke 2.40-52. The Child Jesus in the Home.
	Nov.	26.	Deuteronomy 6.1-9. The Religious Training of a Child.
	Nov.	27.	Matthew 19.1-9. The Sanctity of Marriage.
IX.	Nov.	28.	Luke 24.28-35. Grace at Meals.
	Nov.	29.	Ephesians 6.1-9. Domestic Duties.
	Nov.	30.	2 Timothy 1.3-14. The Gain of a Godly Lineage.
	Dec.	1.	Psalm 78.1-8. Safeguarding Future Generations.
X.	Dec.	2.	Luke 10.25-37. Who is my Neighbor?
	Dec.	3.	Matthew 25.31-46. Neighborliness a Touchstone of Character.
	Dec.	4.	James 1.19-27. Personal Religion and Social Service.
	Dec.	5.	Leviticus 19.9-18. Just Conduct toward Neighbors Required.
	Dec.	6.	Acts 8.26-39. Helping Neighbors in the Way of Life.
	Dec.	7.	Acts 2.37-47. The Social Effects of Salvation.
	Dec.	8.	Luke 6.27-36. God's Way of Loving Enjoined.
XI.	Dec.	9.	Deuteronomy 24.10-18. Putting Religion into Business.
	Dec.	10.	Ephesians 6.1-9. Pleasing our Common Master.
	Dec.	11.	Amos 5.6-15. Injustice Offensive to God.
	Dec.	12.	Matthew 20.1-16. Laborers in the Vineyard.
	Dec.	13.	Deuteronomy 5.12-20. Basic Principles for Industry.
	Dec.	14.	Ecclesiastes 5.10-20. True Riches.
	Dec.	15.	Matthew 7.1-5. Impartial Judgment.
XII.	Dec.	16.	Luke 2.8-20. The Birth of Jesus.
	Dec.	17.	Matthew 18.1-10. The Child in the Kingdom.
	Dec.	18.	1 Samuel 3.10-19. The Child in the Church.
	Dec.	19.	Acts 7.20-34. Formative Influences in Childhood.
	Dec.	20.	Genesis 22.1-13. Father and Son.
	Dec.	21.	Acts 22.1-10. The Religious Education of a Child.
	Dec.	22.	Isaiah 11.1-9. The World Made Safe for Childhood.
XIII.	Dec.	23.	Psalm 122. Love for God's House.
	Dec.	24.	Hebrews 10.19-26. Incentives to Worship.
	Dec.	25.	Matthew 2.7-12. Wise Men Worshipping.
	Dec.	26.	Nehemiah 8.1-8. Reading and Understanding God's Word.
	Dec.	27.	Matthew 6.5-15. Fellowship through Prayer.
	Dec.	28.	1 John 3.13-24. Fellowship through Service.
	Dec.	29.	Revelation 7.9-17. The Church Triumphant Praising God.



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TARBELL'S TEACHERS' GUIDE

TO THE

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS

IMPROVED UNIFORM COURSE FOR 1929

INTRODUCTION

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

A Great Calling

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things—
Of shoes and ships and sealing wax
And cabbages and kings."

Shall we begin with "kings," and talk about teachers and the greatness of their calling? "There is nothing under heaven greater than the teacher" is a Chinese saying. Remembering Ruskin's definition of education as leading human souls to what is best, and making what is best of them, one must agree with the Chinese.

That was a beautiful tribute which Dr. Henry van Dyke paid to The Unknown Teacher in his oration at the Sesquicentennial of Phi Beta Kappa. The teachers he had primarily in mind are the day school and college teachers, but I find his words especially applicable to the church school teacher:

"I sing the praise of the Unknown Teacher. Great generals win campaigns, but it is the Unknown Soldier who wins the war. Famous educators plan new systems of pedagogy, but it is the Unknown Teacher who guides the young. For him no trumpets blare, no chariots wait, no golden decorations are decreed. He strives to conquer the evil powers which are the enemies of youth. He awakens the sleeping spirits. He lights many candles which in later years will shine back to cheer him. This is his reward."

The greatness of the teacher's task challenges him to meet it in a great way. "Never let your zeal flag; maintain the spiritual glow" is Moffatt's translation of words written by Paul to the Christians at Rome. On reading these words, the Roman Christians would think of the fire in the temple of Vesta in their city which was never allowed to go out, and would see the words' implication that they themselves were temples in whom the spiritual fire must be kept burning. There is no pursuit which demands a larger store of glowing enthusiasm to carry it through to success than does church school teaching. The teacher must not only teach but inspire, and to inspire others he must himself be inspired. Let the teacher say to himself: Let me not be like sparklers which give forth brilliant flashes of fire for a brief moment and then are but stiff bits of wire from which the chemical that coated them has burned off; let me rather be like the fire in the temple of Vesta; let me maintain the spiritual glow; never let my zeal flag.

Whatever our other duties and engagements may be, we should never go to our classes grudgingly. We should not look upon our teaching as an "extra" to be crowded into time which we covet for some other activity. Teaching does make inroads upon time and strength, but how otherwise could we have so great an opportunity for service? And are not the words of the Bishop of London true, that in using our gifts of teaching for the good of others there is a joy we cannot have, and never will have, in any other way?

"How do you account for his advancement?" one friend asked another, referring

to a minister whom they both had known in their youth and who had become almost a national figure.

"As nearly as I can find out," the other replied, "he simply tackled his job in sober earnest, did his work without shirking or scamping, and has somehow found a way both in preaching and in his way of living and of meeting men to make religion seem the most attractive thing in life." How the Sunday School world needs such men and women on its teaching staff!

May our teaching be greatly done. Dean Charles Reynolds Brown has this fine picture of a real preacher (teacher): "His face and bearing, his voice and eye, all his mental faculties—reason, judgment, insight, imagination, and the rest—all his spiritual faculties—sympathy, aspiration, high resolve, faith, hope and love—all these are engaged in a concentrated movement upon the minds and hearts of his listeners."

Better Teaching

You have been asked to teach by some one who judges that you are at present the best person he can find for the class in hand. The right way to meet such a call is Isaiah's—Here am I; send me. The wrong way is Jonah's—a curt refusal or its equivalent.

If you think the superintendent is mistaken about your ability, or fails to appreciate your drawbacks, then start in to overcome the handicaps, put your best self into the work, and make yourself the one for the place. John Henry Newman and Richard Hurrell Froude in their youth often repeated to each other as they traveled around the Mediterranean, "They will know the difference when we are back." You and your class will know the difference when you devote yourself wholeheartedly to your task.

"Sunday School would be a whole lot better if the teachers knew more about the lessons," observed a youthful critic. Certainly Sunday School pupils have a right to well-prepared teachers. Moffatt's translation of Paul's counsel in Second Timothy 2.15 reads: Do your utmost to let God see that you at least are a sound workman, with no need to be ashamed of the way you handle the Word of life.

How shall you find the treasure that is in the Bible? "In the same way that we find the treasure that is in the mountain," answers Dr. Richard La Rue Swain, "by using our intelligence and strength in company with those who know most about it. If a person studies his Bible with the help of competent teachers, and at the same time keeps his heart wide open toward God, the great writers of the Scriptures will surely find him; and they will find him deeply."

At a certain famous restaurant you may have "coffee," or "inverted coffee." "Coffee" consists of a tall pitcher of clear coffee and a short pitcher of hot milk. "Inverted coffee" consists of a short pitcher of coffee and a tall pitcher of milk. Now the weekly work of a church school teacher consists of nearly one hundred and sixty-seven hours outside of the school and a little over one hour inside. It is possible to concentrate upon the one hour with poor results, when if one takes the work inverted and concentrates upon the one hundred and sixty-seven hours, the one hour will take care of itself.

You have other things to do? Do them, by all means. But carry your lesson on your mind and heart. This is good psychology. You have solved other problems in this way. When it is important for you to recall an address, you put your mind upon it for a few moments, and then you do not say, "Never mind," and drop it. You say, "It will come," and you go on with your work in hand. And suddenly, as though a messenger had gone to get it and returned successful, the desired address "pops" into your mind. A messenger did go to get it. He hunted for it in your mental files, as ordered, while the conscious you attended to other matters. And he delivered it to your conscious self, as ordered. Without the order, he would not have so served you.

If on Sunday afternoon or evening you will look over the next Sunday's lesson, and will read something about it in this Guide; and if, before going to sleep you will recall the special topic for your class and what you have read about it, and will then say to your messenger, "Bring me something about this in the morning," and will hold your attention to the spiritual truths in the lesson as you go to sleep; and if as you dress the next morning you will recall the subject, something will unfold before your mind like a message delivered to you. And at odd times during the day items bearing upon the lesson will occur to you, generally in connection with your other duties. You will soon gain the habit of jotting them down. If this method is

pursued every day, then the time you set aside specifically for "getting" your lesson will be spent in arranging a wealth of material, and putting aside for future use what you cannot have time for now.

There are only two things which a mind thus trained needs to do consciously in working hours. One is to read more or less of what has been written by those who have been studying the subject you are dealing with, and the other is to arrange in order the results of your reading and thinking.

The Menace of the Groove

"The difference between a groove and a grace is only a matter of depth," Professor Silvester Horne reminds us, but how easily and unconsciously a grace becomes a groove! Admirable methods of teaching are overworked, and of this the worker is wholly unaware. One teacher I know always begins the lesson period with a reference to a book he has read the past week, whether or not it has any bearing upon the topic for the hour; another whose unvarying point of attack is a staccato question. There is nothing so deadly in teaching as deadly monotony.

In one of his books the Reverend F. W. Boreham records this counsel given him in his early ministry: "Keep up your surprise power, my dear fellow; the pulpit must never, never lose its power of startling people!" Evidently the Australian essayist has never forgotten this counsel, for it is the surprising, original way in which he treats the simplest of incidents that gives us joy.

In another place Mr. Boreham asks, "Is it enough for a preacher to preach the truth?" And then he refers to a sermon to which he had listened which he had found most ineffective. Every sentence was splendidly true, and yet not a single sentence startled him. There was no sting in it. He seemed to have heard it all over and over again; he could even see what was coming. "Surely," he said, "it is the preacher's [teacher's] duty to give the truth such a setting, and present it in such a way, that the oldest truth will appear newer than the latest sensation. He must arouse a man from his torpor; he must compel him to open his eyes and pull himself together; he must make him sit up and think."

The Conference Plan

In our progressive institutions for higher education, in our high schools as well as in our colleges and universities, the attitude and emphasis have wholly changed from what they were a generation ago. Then the curriculum was planned to educate the students; now it is planned to help the students educate themselves. The formal courses of study of a generation ago have been exchanged for courses which are "shot through with material that feeds into life experiences."

Ray Stannard Baker in his life of Woodrow Wilson quotes the remark of a former student at Princeton University to the effect that Wilson often gave too much and demanded too little of his students. This is a serious fault of many church school teachers. Especially are young people's and adult classes in danger of being "lectured to death" by their leaders. There must be class participation, whatever the age of the pupils, if its members are to be vitally interested or influenced. In every lesson there will be some things which the teacher must perforce tell, for they are not within their pupils' ken, just as there are others which he should elicit by questions from the class, for they are facts in the possession of the class or principles which may be developed by questions. There will be a class period in which the leader informs or lectures, and also a period in which the pupils report or answer questions or themselves question and seek information, and the two periods may preferably intermingle. A wise teacher does not lecture to passive pupils: he leads alert pupils to think and learn for themselves.

Enthusiasts of the Dalton Plan in public school work claim that under this system education is "no longer a ritual; it is a glorious adventure." If you have not been trying the conference plan, you will be surprised to find that it is, in truth, an adventure glorious, albeit somewhat difficult at first. It is far more difficult to hold a conference with your pupils than to do all the talking yourself, for it requires a more careful preparation, a more definite plan of procedure completely thought out in advance, but the results are worth all the effort. The lecture method often leaves hazy, vague impressions on the pupils' minds; the conference plan creates clear, definite thinking on their part. You well know from your own experience in lecturing that in the process of developing a truth it gains in content for yourself; so will it for your pupils if they are allowed self-expression. In Dr. Jowett's words, truths which hitherto shone like candles will burn like stars.

"People are educated by their own mental activity, not by the mental activity of others."

"Teachers who complain that they cannot get young people to take part in lesson discussion should attend a young people's conference," is the comment made in a report of a young people's convention. "The problem there is how to keep them still. The chairman tries to give everyone an opportunity, and usually there are three or four on their feet at one time. The secret lies wholly in the closeness of the theme of discussion to life as it is understood by young people. When Bible truths are interpreted in terms of life, the young people will discuss them. A young people's conference demonstrates the appeal to young people of the conversational method of teaching."

Stimulate discussion by giving out assignments a week in advance. Give assistance, if need be, in the preparation of assignments until all, even the backward members of the class, are eager to have a share in the conference. In the discussion do not let one or two pupils monopolize the time. For holding the discussion to the topic, neither letting it become aimless nor permitting it to go off on tangents, you are responsible.

Have your mind stored with thought-provocative questions, for without the asking of questions there will be no class discussion. It goes without saying that questions which can be answered by a mere "Yes" or "No" do not lead to anything further. The right questions awaken interest. They compel thought. They elicit information or expressions of opinion or judgment or lead to further questions.

It is not enough to know what questions to ask: one needs to know also how to ask them. A study of the art of questioning brings rich rewards. The Great Teacher used mainly the inductive method, led his hearers to think and discover truth for themselves. How often we hear him say: "How think ye?" "What thinkest thou, Simon?" "But what think ye?" "Whose is this image and superscription?" "Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among robbers?" In the art of questioning, as in everything else, Jesus is our Great Example.

Such questions as these you will often ask: What do you think of this story? What would you have done under these circumstances? What can we learn from this incident? How would you apply this lesson to present day problems? How can we make a practical application of this during the coming week?

Do not ask questions for the sake of probing a pupil's knowledge and finding it wanting. If the answer to a question does reveal dense ignorance of Bible history or geography, remember that there are college youths who think that Bismarck is some kind of chemical and Yom Kippur a kind of fish. Be responsive to your pupils' observations, even more responsive than the observations may deserve. As George Herbert remarks, It is an ill mason that refuseth any stone.

Another useful result of the conference plan is that teachers learn what their pupils are thinking and how to adapt their instruction to their minds. A mother noticed that her small lad always shook hands with his left hand. Instead of directing him to use the other hand, she tried to find out why he used the left, for he was not left-handed. "Because that is right," he declared with conviction. She pursued her questions further and elicited the answer, "Because God does it." Finally she gained the boy's thought that God always shook hands with the left hand, because "Jesus is God, and Jesus 'sits on his right hand,' and so he can't shake that one." This is a true statement of the reasoning of a small child.

Your pupils are older, but some of them are making just as strange deductions. Here is an instance. Certain visitors to the World's Sunday School Association at Glasgow were being shown the Glasgow Cathedral. The guide was explaining that while its foundations date back to the fifth century, most of the superstructure was built in the eleventh century. "How could that be?" one of the delegates questioned. "Columbus didn't discover America until 1492."

The Use of Current Events

The appalling ignorance of Biblical facts disclosed by young people and adults may unconsciously lead teachers to indicate by their teaching that they assume the pupils are equally ignorant of other facts. This is a fault which pupils will not readily overlook. A British minister's conversation with a slater shows the effect of such an attitude. Mr. Hutton asked the man how he had enjoyed a sermon by a noted preacher. "Moderately," was the answer. Upon his expressing surprise,

the man added: "Well, you see, Mr. Hutton, I'll just tell you how he began his sermon. He lifted himself up and looked round about the congregation, and opened his mouth and said: 'In that immortal novel of Cervantes, Don Quihoté, or, as I suppose you call it, Don Quixote—.' I was done with him then. I never listened to another word he said."

Where populations have doubled recently in our land, the number of high school pupils has multiplied five or six times. The high school with its greatly improved methods and courses is becoming the people's university. Through these schools, through radio talks, through moving pictures, through newspapers and magazines, our young people have a better knowledge of general facts and of current events than any previous generation has had. A lesson truth illustrated by a pupil from his general knowledge or knowledge of current events has telling force. Especially do current events raise basic moral questions and bear vitally upon lesson truths.

Activities of Pupils

"I am never absent when there is something to come up in class for which I am responsible," said a young woman to her leader. A class in which one pupil arranges the chairs and provides pencil and paper, and a second hands out and collects literature as needed, and a third takes up the collection, keeps the accounts and makes financial reports, and a fourth keeps an attendance roll and then looks up absent members and reports, and a fifth devises ways to get new members, and a sixth, seventh and eighth work out together social events and group study clubs through the week, and so on, is a class to which all members come promptly every Sunday. The more their initiative is due to your skill, the less they are aware of that fact. If they manage the class all summer without you, engaging and supervising your substitutes, so much the better teacher are you.

> Count that week lost in which six week days pass
> Without some vital contact with your class,

to parody a poet. At times a local need will arise which you think your young people are the suitable agents to meet. Perhaps some one ought to send flowers. Do not wait for Sunday to attend to it: it would be too late, and Sunday is so crowded, anyway. Call up the right class officer. If your class is in fine working order, he will call you up, and together you can plan for telephone or mail directions. When you meet on Sunday the consciousness that a proper task has been properly done since the last meeting gives a glow to this one. "I am an efficient teacher," or "John is an efficient class secretary," or "James is a fine chorister" are not such valuable sentiments as "We are an efficient class." When the pastor desires a house to house visit made throughout his congregation, and mentions it to the church school superintendent, the latter should be able to refer to your class and say, "They can do it." If something is to be distributed, your class officers should be in such good touch with a class of younger boys or girls that they can call on the younger class for co-operation, greatly to the latter's pride and satisfaction. If there is an inter-church movement or a secular movement tending to righteousness on foot, some one in the community ought to bethink him, "There's a class of young people in such a church who could put that through for us, and I believe they would be glad to do it."

One good reason for fostering these weekday activities is their reaction on the Sunday work. Once a week is not often enough for the class activity. A wedge struck hard tends to rebound if not struck again within a certain time limit.

The Books in our 1929 Course

In our year's course we shall study texts taken from fourteen books of the Old Testament and nineteen books of the New, thirty-three books in all, just half of the books of the Bible. Obviously it is not a year in which we can pay much attention to a study of the books as books, and it would be futile to treat them here in our Introduction, as has been our usual custom. Very brief accounts of each book will be found in connection with the lessons.

Orthodoxy: Some Great Christian Teachings

The aim of our First Quarter's Lessons, as stated by our Lesson Committee, is to lead the pupil to an understanding and appreciation of the essential teachings of the Christian faith. During these three months we have lessons about God the Father, Sin and its Consequences, Christ the Savior, the Work of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures, Repentance and Faith, Prayer, Christian Growth, the Christian Church,

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the Christian Sabbath, Stewardship and Missions, the Future Life.

It is fitting that the first lesson concerning the Christian faith should be about the Fatherhood of God. As we grow into a consciousness of God's reality and our own relationship to him, the realization of his Fatherhood changes all life's values for us. Your pupils' thoughts of God may have been tinged by the early Old Testament stories in which there are unchristian conceptions of the Divine Being as One who sanctioned cruelty and wholesale slaughter, and was motivated by feelings of jealousy and anger. In this first lesson we have an opportunity of helping them, as Dr. Glover says Jesus taught us, "to rethink God."

Are your pupils perhaps wondering if sin really matters, and are they hoping to escape its consequences? Have they a living faith in the Savior? Are their thoughts about the Holy Spirit hazy? Do they value the Bible because they read and understand it? Do they rightly know what repentance and faith mean? Do they perhaps think of prayer as beggary, a possible way of getting things? Do they realize that a Christian must be always growing? Do they value church privileges and are they helpful church members? Do the rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper have for them their full meaning and value? Is the Sabbath for them a day of rest and gladness? Do they spend their money wholly for themselves? Are they sure of a Hereafter and does it have an influence upon their present life?

A wonderful opportunity opens up to us in teaching these essentials of the Christian faith. It is, to be sure, an embarrassment of riches which we have, and you may be tempted to wish for an entire Quarter upon each theme. Your pupils, however, would not. I have found it most difficult to cut down my treatment of these themes to the number of pages possible for each, and careful planning on your part will be necessary in order to bring out in the lesson period what is essential. There is much to discuss, but all the greater will be the impression made if there is restraint.

Orthopraxy: Some Social Teachings of the Bible

In our Fourth Quarter's Lessons the aim given is "to guide the pupil into an understanding of Bible teaching on some social relationships, with a view to the establishing of right habits and attitudes in dealing with others."

Recognizing our Debt to Others, Keeping Fit for the Sake of Others, Useful Work a Christian Duty, the Christian View of Recreation, Respect for Rightful Authority, World Peace through Mutual Understanding, Living with People of Other Races, the Higher Patriotism, Helping Neighbors in Need, the Christian Spirit in Industry, the Child in the Christian World, and Fellowship through Worship—these are the topics for the Quarter.

In far too many instances pupils gain the idea from church school teaching that to be religious means to be "good," and goodness in the abstract does not allure them. To be good means to be good for something. Religion is a social obligation. Here in this last Quarter we have thirteen lessons where goodness is related in a concrete way to one's life with others. It is a very practical, helpful course of lessons.

"Two tremendous questions face modern Christianity: faith in God, which is the only theological problem now worth much discussing, and the application of Jesus' principles to personal and social life, on which the continuance of Christianity crucially depends. I do not see how any one can read what intelligent Christians now are writing or know what unwritten things they anxiously are thinking, without seeing that Canute could more easily have stayed the sea, than obscurantism can keep the Christian mind and conscience of today and tomorrow from facing its great problems. Personally, I think it probable in consequence that the twentieth century, before it is through, will see a renaissance of spiritual life in general and of religion in particular, accompanied by constructive social reformation."

Orthodoxy and orthopraxy, right thinking and right doing, great Christian teachings and some social teachings: these two Quarters' lessons, if rightly taught and apprehended throughout the schools using this series of lessons, will surely help to hasten that renaissance of spiritual life and religion.

Our Second and Third Quarters' Lessons Continue Lessons of 1927

You will recall that during the last half of 1927 our lessons dealt with the early kings and prophets of Israel, from Saul the king to Isaiah the prophet, and that we had lessons from First and Second Samuel, First Kings, Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah. Now we continue for half a year this course in the history and prophecy

of the Old Testament. Our lessons from the Historical Books are taken from Second Kings, Second Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. In the Prophetical Books we have four lessons from Isaiah, five from Jeremiah, three from Ezekiel, four from Daniel, one from Jonah and one from Malachi. There are also four lessons from the Psalms.

How God Spoke to the Prophets

One of the questions asked Dr. Cadman recently was: "Did God actually make himself known to and talk to the Old Testament prophets? If so, why not now when there is so much need of divine guidance?" Were you a mind-reader you might be surprised to find these questions lurking in the minds of your intelligent class.

In answering the second question, Dr. Cadman pointed out our superior guides: the principles proclaimed by the seers of Judaism corroborated by nearly three thousand years' duration; the supreme guidance of the mind that was in Christ; and in addition the majestic laws of psychology and sociology which were unknown to the prophets. "God is simply hammering at the door of every intelligent mind. His wisdom cries aloud in the streets. His directions are impressed upon life in letters of light. Our tragedy is not lack of guidance but neglect of it."

"Did God actually make himself known to and talk to the Old Testament prophets?" Most assuredly he made himself known to them; and he talked to them, but not as one human being talks to another human being. He spoke to them just as he speaks to men today who listen for his "still, small voice"—not by words out of the sky, but by messages directly to minds and hearts. "The Spirit of God wrought a conviction in the prophet's soul so that he felt a divine certainty about the message he uttered." So sure were the prophets that their messages were the messages of God that they used such expressions as "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," "In mine ears saith Jehovah of hosts," "Jehovah of hosts revealed himself in mine ears." Their hearers well understand that those words were not to be taken literally. The expressions meant just what Whittier meant when he wrote:

> "In thoughts which answer to my own,
> In words which reach my inward ear,
> Like whispers from the void Unknown,
> I feel thy living presence here."

The prophets' spirits were attuned to God's spirit: they communed with God, and then they became spokesmen for God to the people. The greatness of their leadership was proportional to the fulness of their insight into his will.

And is this not the great need today? Stanley Jones, who may be termed the modern prophet for India, recalls that the basis of Christianity was original, first hand contact with a living, speaking God, and declares that "we need to take God out of the sky and out of the Book, and know by our own experience that God is and that he is in our soul."

The Prophet as Forthteller

Many of your scholars are thinking of a prophet as a man whose chief function was to predict, for from Bible times till now this has been the erroneous view of multitudes. You recall that Saul on the advice of a servant went to Samuel to learn from the prophet where the lost asses were which he was seeking. But Samuel said to him, "I am the seer; I will tell thee all that is in thine heart"—that was the prophet's affair, to make use of his spiritual insight and to give practical guidance. There were always false prophets, who, for a sufficient fee, would foretell about asses or anything else. Against such false prophets the prophet Isaiah inveighs in one of our lessons, contrasting the divinations of Assyria with the pure word of God which should be Israel's guide.

Ascertain from your pupils their ideas of a prophet, and it will be surprising if some one does not say that he was a man who in some marvelous way could look into the future and tell how things were going to be, hundreds of years before they came to pass. Some of the prophets did foretell the future, but some of them did not; and whether they did or not, makes no difference in their being prophets. That was not their mission. What made a man a prophet was not the *time* he was talking *about*, but the *One* he was talking *for*. They were forthtellers rather than foretellers; they were men who spoke for God. They looked at the world as it was, and sometimes they looked ahead at the world as they believed it was going to be, and they told people what God's plan for it was. They had a clearer compre-

hension of what God wanted than had other men, and they carried that message to every one who would listen to them.

The Work of the Prophets

The prophets were idealistic statesmen, inspired theologians, wise seers, patient preachers, fearless reformers, keen orators, superb poets. As statesmen and critics of their nation they laid bare her sins and dangers, and counseled righteousness as the only basis for permanent national welfare and security. Their messages are so interwoven with the history of their times that it is absolutely necessary to qualify ourselves for understanding them by placing ourselves through study back into their times and amidst the situations which they had to meet. We need to know the political, economic, social and moral history and atmosphere in which they moved, for it was the circumstances of their times which led to their addresses, warnings, threats, entreaties, and promises.

In the following stanza James Russell Lowell might have been writing of the work of the statesmen prophets instead of the great men of the present:

"He who would win the name of truly great
Must understand his own age and the next,
And make the present ready to fulfil
Its prophecy, and with the future merge
Gently and peacefully, as wave with wave."

The prophet rose far above his compatriots in mental, moral and spiritual force. He meditated upon the deeper meanings of life, and strong feelings surged through his soul. He hated injustice and wrong in every form, and was the great-hearted champion of the poor and oppressed. He strove to bring about righteousness among men. Carlyle had much the same feeling as the prophet of old when he wrote to his mother concerning "Past and Present": "I hope it will be a rather useful kind of book. It goes rather in a fiery strain about the present condition of men in general, and the strange pass they are coming to; and I calculate it may awaken here and there a slumbering blockhead to rub his eyes and consider what he is about in God's creation—a thing highly desirable at present."

The prophet was a man of sublime faith in God and of flaming zeal for God. He had caught the vision and heard the message. He held himself responsive to the voice of God on the one hand, and to the welfare of his fellow men on the other. He strove to make them hear and feel what he had heard and felt. "The great task of the prophets was to preserve, develop, spiritualize and encourage the practice of religion in the broadest and fullest sense of the term."

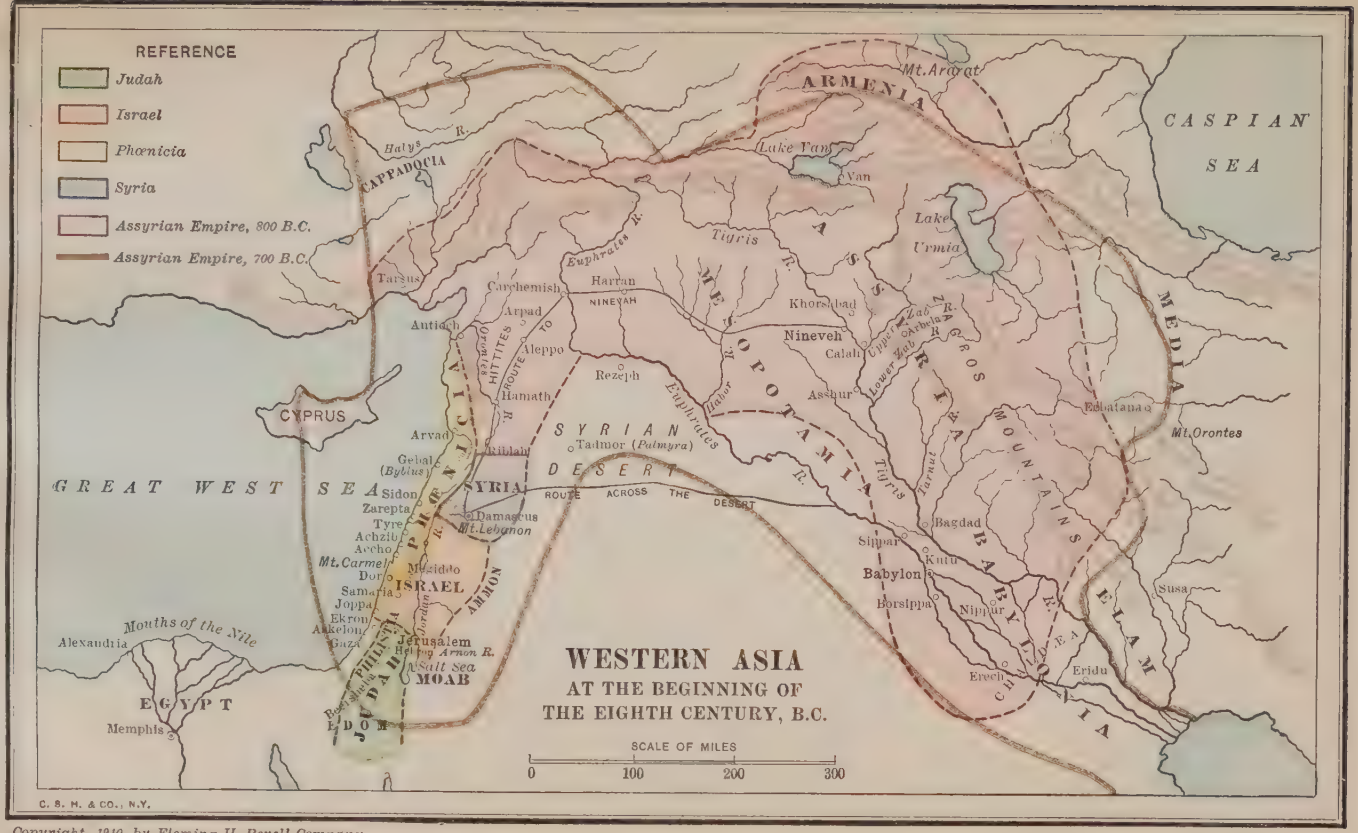
The Value of a Study of the Prophetical Books

There is a thought-provoking passage in Huckleberry Finn where, after his Sunday School teacher had announced that the subject was to be "Moses and the Bulrushes," Huckleberry says: "I was all in a sweat to find out about Moses and the bulrushes, but then I learned that they had been dead a long, long time." For Huckleberry they held no further interest.

It is a long, long time that our prophets have been dead, and their horizons were of that far off age, but their words have a vital appeal for all ages. Each prophet has his own distinctive message for us, but there are certain ideas which they have in common. Among the truths which shine out in the lessons which we study this year from their writings are the following:

1. The supremacy of God. Their faith in him was unfaltering.
2. The close intimacy between God and men. The prophets were filled with a sense of the nearness of God. Theirs was a knowledge of God based on experience.
3. God is Master of his purposes. His plans for the world will triumph.
4. God accomplishes his purposes through men.
5. Morality is more than ritual. "For I desire goodness and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."
6. God is a God of justice and yet of mercy. Evil men may be redeemed.
7. The good will ultimately triumph.
8. True religion and undefiled: "For what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and love kindness, and walk humbly with thy God?"

Nowhere in the Old Testament shall we find more interesting and gripping lessons than these from the prophets. There is grandeur in their teaching, and with Milton, we say, "There are no orations equal to theirs." We find in their words foregleams of the words of the Light of the World.



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LILIES OF THE FIELD, PALESTINE

FIRST QUARTER

SOME GREAT CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS

Aim: To lead the pupil to an understanding and appreciaton of the essential teachings of the Christian faith.

LESSON I—JANUARY 6

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

GOLDEN TEXT: Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him. Psalm 103.13

LESSON Exodus 34.4-7; Psalm 103.1-5, 10-14; Isaiah 40.27-31; Matthew 6.24-34; John 3.3-6; 4.20-24; 8.40-47; Romans 2.2-11; 8.14-17; 1 John 4.7-16.
DEVOTIONAL READING John 3.3-6; 4.20-24

MATTHEW 6.24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. 25 Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? 26 Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? 27 And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? 28 And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? 31 Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. SERVE GOD ONLY, verse 24. You cannot serve, be the slave of, both God and mammon. The word *mammon* comes from a Syriac word meaning *that in which one puts his trust,* and because so many put their trust in riches, the word has come to personify riches. You cannot put your trust in God and also in riches. It is not a sin to have riches, but it is a sin to put your trust in riches.

You cannot serve God and mammon; there is room in your heart for loyalty to one only. "How do you know there is but one God?" a father asked his son, to test him. "Suppose, after all, we should be mistaken, and it should turn out that there are a great many gods?" "Why, father," the boy replied, "where would you put them? There's room for only One."

II. TRUST GOD, verses 25-34. Five times in ten verses Jesus says, Be not anxious. Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life. The Authorized Version reads, Take no thought for your life, because at the time that translation was made the words included the idea of anxiety, and meant take no anxious thought. Moffatt's translation of the rest of the verse reads: Do not trouble about what you are to eat in life, nor about what you are to put on your body; surely life means more than food, surely the body means more than clothes!

"Randall in his New Philosophy of Life shows that there are two ways of emptying a glass of water. One way is to turn the glass upside down, and the other is to substitute shot for the water by dropping it in, shot after shot, until the water is crowded out. This is the Bible way of crowding out anxiety. We have not the power to empty our souls of all anxiety by turning them upside down, but we can drop into our souls, moment by moment, and day by day, prayer, meditation, Bible study, and worship, until our minds are so filled with the thought of God and our souls are so filled with longing for God that we have no room left for anxiety" (E. A. McAlpin).

Then Jesus gives us a lesson from the birds. It is not idleness nor want of forethought which Jesus commends to our thought in the life of the wild birds; it is their freedom from care.

"Dust, by its own nature, can only rise so far above the road, and birds which fly higher never have it upon their wings. So the heart that knows how to fly high enough escapes those little cares and vexations which brood upon the earth but cannot rise above it into that purer air" (Henry Ward Beecher).

Are you not of greater value than the birds? One evening Luther watched a bird as it sat perched on a limb of a tree, and then he said: "This little bird has had its supper, and is now getting ready to go to sleep here, quite secure and content, never troubling itself what its food will be, or where its lodgings on the morrow. Like David, it 'abides under the shadow of the Almighty.' "

"He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky his certain flight,
In the long way that I shall tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright" (Bryant).

Next, Jesus points out the uselessness of worry: Which of you can add an ell to his height by troubling about it? The Greek word translated *cubit* may mean extent of life or of height. Compare the saying of Queen Elizabeth when dying, "Millions of money for an inch of time!"

Did fretting ever mend anything or lessen any trouble? "If minding will not mend it, then better not to mind."

Now comes a lesson from the flowers. In verses 28 and 29 Jesus "shows his vivid feeling for the beauty of nature. All of the magnificence of Solomon was nothing compared with the charm of the common flowers that sprang up by the roadside. What was true of the lily was doubtless true of the whole of nature in the eyes of Jesus. Sunsets and sunrises—the far-off pearly whiteness of Mount Hermon, the deep blue of Galilee, the breakers of the Mediterranean shore, all thrilled him. The whole creation was to him a message from his Father."

But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? The Expository Times bids us note that it is not said God clothes the field with grass, but that he clothes the grass itself. "For there is a time when the grass is naked. It is bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other kind. But in that bare grain, in every naked seed of grass, there is packed a whole set of weaving machinery, distilling apparatus and pumping gear; and along with it all there is packed driving power in the shape of vital force. Place the seed under favorable conditions and the pumps begin to work, the shuttles begin to fly, and the grass receives its raiment of green or gold."

"And I will trust that he who heeds
The life that hides in mead and wold,
Who hangs yon alder's crimson beads
And stains these mosses green and gold,

Will still, as he hath done, incline
His gracious care to me and mine" (Whittier).

Be not therefore anxious about food or drink or clothing, for which the Gentile nations are seeking, for you are children of a heavenly Father who knows that you have need of all these things. Seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Make first things first. A traditional saying of Jesus, repeated by Clement of Alexandria in the second century, seems an interpretation of this verse: "Seek the great things, and the little things will be added unto you; and be anxious for the heavenly, and the earthly will be vouchsafed to you as a surplus."

For us, God's kingdom is his rule over his subjects here and now; God's righteousness is that of right relationship, love and loyalty, to God and to men living in this world as he would have us live—in a word, Christlikeness. The rich man in the parable sought secondary things first and let the first go altogether, and he stood forth a beggar in the Kingdom; Jesus sought first his Father's Kingdom, and though they took from him even his garments, all things were added unto him, and his place is at the right hand of God. "The promise is interpreted by David's testimony of Ps. 37.25 and by Paul's experience and assurance of Phil. 4.11, 19. So interpreted, life proves it true; those who give themselves wholly to God's service often live in poverty, but they rarely or never suffer for want of necessary food and raiment" (Lyman Abbott).

Be not therefore anxious for the morrow, for the morrow will be anxious for itself. "Let the principle be that all anxiety shall be in the future, not about the future" (R. F. Horton). When Jesus was on the cross he took thought for the mother's future and gave her into John's care. Forethought is wise; foregloom is unwise. Foresight is good, foreboding is evil. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. "Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but it empties today of its strength" (Alexander Maclaren).

"One day at a time!
It's a wholesome rhyme—
A good one to live by;
A day at a time" (Helen Hunt Jackson).

A good resolve to make: I will this day and every day endeavor to live a serene life, free from all anxiety, trusting in the promises of my Heavenly Father; I will have the world but will not let the world have me, for while I will love the good things of this world that are my Father's gifts to me, I will hold them as of lesser importance than the supreme things that are also his gifts—his kingdom within and his righteousness.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Consider the lilies of the field, verse 28. In the low lands of the hill country of Palestine whole tracts are scarlet or purple with the lilies of the field.

A Palestinian Oven

The grass of the field which is cast into the oven, verse 30. The term rendered *grass* includes weeds and flowers. All these wither very rapidly in the East (compare Ps. 90.6); and owing to the scarcity of fuel, this dried vegetation is still often used to heat ovens for baking bread. The oven was a large jar made of clay, wider at the bottom. It was heated by placing the fuel within, and the ashes being removed through a hole in the bottom, the flat cakes of bread were spread both on the inside and the outside and thus baked.

Sometimes it was not a movable jar, but a fixture, and the primitive contrivance was probably a hole in the earth, with compacted sides.—John A. Broadus, in Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew.

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Sermon on the Mount

Chapters V, VI and VII of Matthew's Gospel we call The Sermon on the Mount, a title first given to them by Augustine, which came into general use by the time of the Reformation. While the "multitude" was near by, the Sermon was spoken chiefly to the disciples, Lk. 6.20. Tradition says that the "mountain" was Kurn Hattin, or the Horns of Hattin, about five miles west of the Sea of Galilee. At its base Saladin defeated the Crusaders.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

John Fiske tells us that in his childhood, whenever the word "God" was mentioned, he saw the image of a venerable bookkeeper, with white, flowing beard, standing behind a high desk and writing down the deeds of John Fiske.

"The most tremendous thing you can give to others is their first idea about God," declares Dr. J. H. Jowett. "If you give them a wrong idea, you may blight their lives, but if you give them a right one they may just leap into love at first sight and enjoy him and what is right to the end of their days."

"I think always of how a child shall receive his idea of God," writes Miss Slattery. "In a majority of cases nowadays his ideas hinge and turn upon the instruction of his teacher. It is a most important matter, the giving to a soul the consciousness of God!"

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

Beginning the Lesson

What is our Lesson Topic? How does our Creed begin? How do you habitually think of God, as Father or as Almighty, of his relationship to you or of his infinite power and majesty? Who gave us our thought of God as Father?

How is God spoken of in the Old Testament? There he is known as the Creator, the Self-existent One, the Eternal, the Supreme Ruler, the Lord of Hosts, or of battles. He is also spoken of as the Father of Israel, who made of his chosen people a nation and disciplined them in love, but it was Jesus who gave to man's relationship to that Father the true and beautiful interpretation that men are the children, not the servants, of God, that the Divine Fatherhood is like the best in human fatherhood, only infinitely greater and better.

How did Jesus define God in his memorable talk with the woman of Samaria? "God is Spirit": these words convey the best idea of the personality of God which our language can give us. All that we know of God's Being is summed up in Jesus' words, "God is Spirit," and in our search for a word that shall express what the Infinite Spirit is to us, the most satisfying is found in Jesus' words "Your Father and my Father." Jesus revealed the Father.

What did Jesus say about the Father's care, as told in the Sermon on the Mount? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Ways of Knowing God

We gain an idea of God through nature, because God has expressed himself through these visible things and forces. "The heavens declare the glory of God," because God made them, and we may rightly judge a person's character by what he makes. It has pleased him to express divine attributes through nature. The beauty of the rose witnesses to the beauty of God. The majesty of the mountains proclaims that God is majestic; the delicacy of the tiniest flower witnesses to infinite graciousness. Just as the architect of a great cathedral has found expression through the building he planned, so has God found limited expression and is still showing his character in a measure through the universe.

God has also manifested his nature by the way he controls and directs the affairs of the world. History is a wonderful record of God's ways with men. The Hebrew nation was typical of all nations. When they followed the gracious suggestions of their divine Leader the nation prospered; but when they went wandering after idols

of other nations those very nations brought chastisement upon them. This has been true as well of Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, and Rome; it is true of our modern nations.

In our own lives God has shown himself even more clearly and more fully than in nature and in history; for he has shown his love and mercy, and these are the greatest of his attributes.

God has revealed himself in words. He has spoken to humankind. We know him by what he has said to us. The wonderful words of life show to us a wonderful, life-giving God.

God has revealed his character by deeds. Supreme among these is the gift of his only-begotten Son. For God is more than almighty, and more than holy and righteous. God is love.

There is a contemplative way that helps us to appreciate the nature of God, which is but rarely applied. Think of all the limitations and imperfections of human nature and eliminate these in thinking of God. Man can watch over his dearest friends only a few hours without need of sleep. The great Shepherd of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. Man grows old; God remains forever young. Man wearies soon; but God never wearies or faints. Man may forgive for a while; but soon loses his patience; God's pity and forgiveness are applied day after day. Man knows his neighborhood intimately; God knows the universe in its minutest details. Man began in time; God never began. Let the highest qualities of man be thought of to the *n*th power, and we have some vague idea of the infinitude of God.

The Infinite cannot be defined; there can be no adequate definition of God. Defining infinity is a contradiction of terms. "Fines" means bounds, and God is boundless. It may be possible to make a statement about God; or to predicate something of him; but this will always involve the silent confession that we are considering only a phase of God's being.

God cannot be classified; for he is supreme. Classification calls for similars and equals. But though man was made in the likeness of God, the similarity is that of creature and Creator, which does not allow for categorizing. There is no equality. For this reason we cannot form a concept of God. There is no other being that fully explains him.

Through nature, history, human life, the sacred Scriptures, and supremely through Jesus Christ, we are daily learning about God. The moment will never come, neither in this world nor in that which is to come, when we shall "know the Almighty to perfection." His infinite nature, the harmony of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, their relation within the Godhead and their relation to us, of these we shall learn ever more through the unmeasured æons of eternity.

With the knowledge of God which we have received from the various sources already mentioned, we may form some such statement as this: God is the one infinite, spiritual Being, to whom the universe owes its origin, in whose likeness we are created, and to whom all things and beings are related; for in wisdom, justice and love he governs and sustains them all.—Condensed from Things Most Surely Believed, by Gerritt Verkuyl.

The Hebrew Idea of God and Christ's Revelation of God

Before the Reformation, amid all the perversions of Catholicism, one thing true and beautiful was preserved, the idea of tenderness in Deity. But when the Reformation came, in its righteous indignation against the perversions of Rome, it swept away much beside the perversions and this idea of tenderness in Deity was lost. The old Hebrew idea of God as infinite strength and power was rehabilitated. The parent disappeared, the King was again visible. Calvinism built up its iron logic and struck the fear of God into the hearts of men. The fiercest psalms of David became the popular lyrics of the day, and it was the God of Battles who was again invoked and worshiped. The God Cromwell worshiped was the God of the Hebrews, clothed in thunder; the God Milton adored was the "Great Taskmaster," in whose eye he desired to live. The age demanded a stern ideal of God to inspire the valors of the battlefield, and found it in the Hebrew God. And wherever the Reformation prevailed, more or less this idea triumphed. God was worshiped with fear and served with trembling. The result was stern ideals of duty, but also much dreary and slavish formality in religion. Let us remember, then, that this is not the God whom Christ revealed in the story of the Prodigal Son, nor the God of whom Paul spoke when he said, "We have not received the spirit of fear, but the spirit

of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." One is our Master, even Christ, and it is from his words and his alone we derive our idea of God.—From a Sermon by W. J. Dawson.

Some People's Ideas of God

In a recent lecture Dr. T. R. Glover said that some have an idea of God which is a curious combination, composed of the odds and ends of other people's ideas of God. Or their idea of God is of a jealous Being who slew the Canaanites in the Old Testament. Perhaps there is something out of Plato in their idea of God, and something out of the opinion of the neo-platonists, and something out of the prophets of Israel, and something out of the Law Books, and something out of the newspapers and magazines of the day and the books of popular science with perhaps a touch of auto-suggestion.

The better way of knowing God, he said, is by the methods of science, proceeding from the known to the unknown—from the Christ of the New Testament to God himself.

The Fatherhood of God Is the Theology We Want

If God is our Father, there is a living Person whom he can love and who loves us. God is not an abstraction. He is not an intellectual necessity. If he is our Father, he is not a somewhat, but he is a Some One; he is a person who loves us, and whom we can love.

If God is our Father, then doubtless God has, in some true sense, come into this world of ours. He has come to his children. He does come to his children. An absentee God might be God, but he would not be Father. If he were perpetually and always an absentee God, there would be nothing in him to answer to the instinct of a Father.

If we believe that this Infinite and this Eternal One is our Father, we shall expect that he will make some fatherly provision for his children. We shall not believe that this is an orphan world; we shall see the witness of his presence. The world will be to us the good gift of the good God. It will not appear strange to us to say, Give us this day our daily bread, if we really first say, Our Father.

Surely, if we believe that he is our Father, we shall believe that he will care for our ignorance, our sorrows, and our sins; we shall believe that he will lift us up when we have fallen down.

"Our Father" carries with it belief in a personal God; the sense of the divine in humanity; the consciousness that every man's character is measured by likeness to God; belief in a revelation of God, in inspiration coming from God to man; in a God who provides for the necessities of his children; in a forgiving God. It carries with it belief in the Holy Spirit,—the Spirit of God that enters into the spirits of men and dwells with them and lives with them and animates them; belief in the forgiveness of God toward men in their sins and their errors and their blindness; belief in prayer,—the heart of God reached by us. It carries with it, above all, this: that God comes into the world, not that he may bring death, not that he may stifle men, but that he may give them life and give it more abundantly. "When ye pray, say 'Our Father' "; when hereafter you do say, "Our Father," God grant that it may mean a little more to you than it has meant in the past.—Lyman Abbott, in Problems of Life.

The Tenderness of God the Father

"I went to a wealthy merchant and asked him to give a church member of mine a trial," an English pastor writes. "At the end of a week I went to see the merchant. 'It's no use,' he said. 'We can't keep him. He's totally incapable. Honest and well-meaning, yes; but you don't pay for that alone in business.' I admitted that was quite fair. I stayed with my friend the merchant a little while, and he spoke of his son at Cambridge. The son had failed a second time to obtain his degree, and his father was greatly disappointed. 'Still,' he said, 'he's a good lad. He does try, and that's a great thing, isn't it?' Now there was not the slightest inconsistency in these two positions. On the one occasion he spoke of a servant whom he valued for what he could do in business. He did not pay men for trying. In the other case he spoke of his son, whom he valued, not for what he could do, but for himself, and who was trying. After all, is not this what the world wants to realize today? God is not merely our Master, he is our Father. We are his children, not his servants. He values us, not for what we can do, but for the fact that we do try—and that is the great thing. The love and tenderness of God

our Father is infinite, and you can prove it by making infinite claims on his mercy and goodness."

What Is God to You?

There are those who never allow God to enter their active consciousness, and to them God is nothing. There are others to whom God is an absentee landlord, who exacts forced tribute. And there are those to whom God is a weak father, who cannot bear to see his children grieved, who would never punish them, who yields in every way to his spoiled children. And there are happily a great multitude who go to Jesus Christ to learn who God is, who take the best of human fatherhood and multiplying it by infinity gain thus their idea of God. How do you think of God?

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The capacity for God. See book with this title by R. F. Horton.

2. The Christlike God. See book with this title by Francis J. McConnell.

3. God the loving Father. See Chapter II of A Working Theology, by Alexander MacColl.

4. God must not be identified with man's interpretation of God. See My Idea of God, a book edited by Joseph Fort Newton. "God and his truth and his law and his love are changeless, though our understanding of them is ever changing."

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What proves our fellowship with God? 2. What sins are enumerated in these texts which form part of our whole lesson: Mark 7.14-23 and Romans 1.18-32; 3.10-18? 3. Why are young people so reluctant to admit that wrong doing is sin? 4. What is sin? 5. What is the difference between a sin and a crime? 6. Who once talked with Jesus and seemed to think himself free from sin, and what did Christ tell him? 7. What kind of sins did Jesus especially denounce?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS
WHAT THE HEAVENLY FATHER MEANS TO ME

Beginning the Lesson

In a letter which a brilliant young officer, just beginning his career, received from an old friend of the family, were these words: "Remember you are your father's son, carrying a good name." Ian Maclaren, who wrote the letter, might have given the young man much advice, but he wanted to say something which would not be forgotten, which would make an irresistible appeal to the character and honor of the young officer, and so he counseled him to remember that he was his father's son.

That young man's father meant a great deal to him. He was an inspiration to right living, an example, a help, a comfort. And all that is best in an earthly father—and infinitely more—Jesus tells us we may see in God when he bids us call him Father. When Jesus wanted to clearly picture God to his friends he called him Father—there was no other name so fitting.

There is a legend of a dialogue between a Jew and a Persian priest as they gazed at the sacred fire in a Persian temple. "Do you worship the fire?" the Jew asked, and the priest answered, "Not the fire, it is only an emblem of the sun." "But do you worship the sun?" "No; that is but the emblem of the invisible light which preserves all things." Then the Persian inquired, "How do you name the Supreme Being?" And the Israelite answered: "We call him Jehovah Adonai, the Lord who was and is and shall be." "Your word is great and glorious," said the Persian, "but it is terrible." Then a Christian approached and said, "We call him Abba Father." In surprise one of his hearers said: "Your word is nearest and highest, but who gave you courage to call the Eternal thus?" "The Father himself, through his Son," was the answer.

What do the words of Jesus recorded in our lesson tell us about the Father? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

How We Should Think of God

I think of God in more than one way. I am obliged to use all the rich names the Bible gives him. Sometimes one of them seems best, sometimes another. They are not mutually exclusive. I think of him as my Creator, and it makes my life seem sacred to me to think that it came from him. I must not abuse or regard lightly what he has made. He has real and large rights in me because he is my

Creator. The world I live in is his world, and I must live in it and use it as his. I think of him as my Lord and Ruler. He does not seem to me a tyrant or a despot. His relation seems to me something more, not something less, than a Father's relation. I am his child, but I am also a member of his Kingdom. These things are not contradictory unless I get them out of balance. He is my Father and I am his son. I trust that I am a well-beloved son. All that lies in that relation belongs to me, and if he thinks of his children as I think of mine, all that lies in that relation belongs to him also. And I like the word that describes Abraham as the friend of God. I like to think of myself in that relation. Friendship is necessary to life, and I prize the friendship of God beyond all others.—William Frazer McDowell, in A Man's Religion.

What Does God Do for Us as our Father?

The New Testament says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father." Is not that magnificent! What a picture of the way the Father gives. Every good gift. Not the horrible and evil and diseased and sinful things that come to us—they do not come from the Father; only the good and the perfect gifts. Whatever makes the world more beautiful, whatever makes life nobler and better, whatever makes us stronger and completer in body, mind, and soul,—these things come from the Father. And every one of them comes from him; every good gift. No matter if they reach us through human friends, we trace them all right back to the dear Father above, and believe that he put into the earthly friends' hearts the thoughts which made them do as they did. And not only so; every good gift that comes into the world to beautify it, and to strengthen the life of all living creatures, is a sign of the Father's care. Sometimes, perhaps, in the country you have heard the birds singing at sunset in many different keys and notes, as if their hearts were brimming over with happiness, and you have wondered how do all these little creatures get taken care of so that they always seem so well and happy, and the New Testament answers: This also is from the Father, "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." Such is the giving of the Father.—Charles Cuthbert Hall, in The Silver Cup.

What May We Do for God as our Father?

The New Testament says, "Shall we not be in subjection unto the Father of our spirits and life?" That is the thought of obeying the Father, of being an obedient child of your Father who is in Heaven. You cannot obey the Father and be in subjection to him unless you knew what he wants you to do and to be, and the Bible fully shows you what the Father would have you do and be. This life of subjection to your Heavenly Father is a glad companionship. The New Testament says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father." Yes, it is fellowship. The Father and you are friends. I shall never forget the day when a little companion of mine threw his arms about me and walked at my side saying, "Papa! you and I are great friends." And every obedient child of the Heavenly Father may look up into his face and say without a doubt, "Thou and I are great friends."—Charles Cuthbert Hall.

Sentence Sermons

God's goodness hath been great to thee.
Let never day or night unhallowed pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done.—Shakespeare.

To one fixed trust my spirit clings;
I know that God is good!—Whittier.

Here is the truth in a little creed,
Enough for all the roads we go:
In love is all the law we need,
In Christ is all the God we know.—Edwin Markham.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is the first great sin recorded in the Bible? 2. What is the definition of sin in 1 Jn. 3.4? 3. What does the word *Advocate*, 1 Jn. 2.1, mean? 4. What does the word *propitiation* mean? 5. If we are true Christians, what does our text say we will do? 6. What does the Lord's Prayer say about sins? 7. Whose sins? 8. Think about a sin to which you are inclined, and see how free from it you can keep this week with God's help.

SIN

GOLDEN TEXT: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1.8, 9

LESSON Genesis 3.1-24; 6.5-8; Mark 7.14-23; Romans 1.18-32; 3.10-18; I John 1.5 to 2. 6

DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 51.1-10

1 JOHN 1.5 And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2.1 My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. 3 And hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him: 6 he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. WHAT GOD IS, AND WHAT WE SHOULD BE, 1.5, 6. The message which John had received from Christ (see verses 1-3) and which he now hands on, is that God is light, and in him is no darkness (moral darkness, i.e. sin) at all. "Light, as here contrasted with darkness, means not intellectual illumination but ethical perfection. It describes the absolute purity and holiness of God as he has been revealed in Christ" (A. S. Peake). God is spirit (Jn. 4.24); God is light (1 Jn. 1.5); and God is love (1 Jn. 4.8). "Spirit, light, love are not mere attributes, they are himself. They are probably the nearest approach to a definition of God that the human mind could frame or comprehend. The more we consider them, the more they satisfy us. The simplest intellect can understand their meaning; the subtlest cannot expound it" (A. Plummer).

It is not possible to live in sin and at the same time to enjoy the fellowship of God, John next declares. "Walk" in this verse 6, is a familiar figure of speech, meaning one's customary conduct. "Do not the truth" means do not live in harmony with the demands of truth. "The life as well as the statements of the lips is false."

"A life in moral darkness can no more have communion with God, than a life in a coal-pit can have communion with the sun" (A. Plummer).

II. THE ATONEMENT FOR SIN, 1.7. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light (we *walk;* God *is:* we move through space and time; he is in eternity), we have fellowship one with another (the nearer we are to God, the closer is our fellowship with one another).

"While we walk with God in light,
God our hearts doth still unite;
Dearest fellowship we prove,
Fellowship in Jesus' love" (Charles Wesley).

"'Walk in the light.' You see where the shadow falls. You can see where the star leads. Follow it with open eyes. Let us try this way of guidance more seriously than we yet have done. The light of good will in all our experiments! The glow of kindness in all our efforts! The purpose of beneficence in all our plans! You are my partner, neighbor, and I am yours. But to tell the truth, between us we have small capital and less experience. To carry out the enterprise we shall need the help of our silent Partner—the divine invisible One who knows all" (Henry van Dyke).

And the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. "Only those who walk in

the light can appropriate the cleansing efficacy of the life laid down upon the cross. The present tense, *cleanseth,* denotes a continuous process" (Dummelow).

"Even the atonement itself is not the answer to the question, 'What must I do to be saved from the power of sin?' The answer entirely depends on the atonement, but it is not the atonement. You have gone out into the country on a summer morning, and as you passed some little rustic mill, you saw the miller come out to set his simple machinery agoing for the day. He turned on the sluice, but the water-wheel would not move. Then, with his strong arm he turned it once or twice, then left it to itself to turn busily all the day. It is a sorry illustration in detail, but its principle means this, that the atonement is the first great turn, as it were, which God gives in the morning of conversion to the wheel of the Christian's life. Without it nothing more would be possible: alone it would not be enough. The water of life must flow in a living stream all through the working day and keep pouring its power into it ceaselessly till the life and the work are done.

"Sin is a power in our life; let us fairly understand that it can only be met by another power. The death of Christ, which is the atonement, reconciles us to God, makes our religion possible, puts us in the way of the power which is to come against our sin and deliver our life from destruction. But the Water of Life, which flows from the life of Christ, is the power itself. He redeemeth my life, by his life, from destruction. This, therefore, is the meaning of a profound sentence in which Paul states the true answer to the question, What must I do to be saved? which records this first great fact of salvation and pointedly distinguishes it from the other: 'If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life, Rom. 5.10'" (Henry Drummond).

III. CONSCIOUSNESS AND CONFESSION OF SIN, 1.8-10. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, we lead ourselves astray, and the truth is not in us. "The man who has no sense of sin has little sense of any sort" (Charles R. Brown).

"Where is the man who can stand up in the presence of those who know him and say, 'Every deed that I have done was done in honor and integrity. Every word that has fallen from my lips has been spoken in truth and in kindliness. Every desire that I have harbored in my soul has been one upon which the eye of my Maker might rest with approval'? Can you say that? I am frank to confess that I cannot. I have done wrong. I feel my need of the divine mercy. I want forgiveness, cleansing and renewal. And every man who is honest enough to look himself in the face, without flinching, will be moved to make the same confession" (Charles R. Brown).

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 'Forgive' refers to the remission of punishment; 'cleanse,' to the removal of pollution" (Dummelow). "Remission of sins cannot be sundered from penitence, nor can the peace of God belong to consciences where the fear of God does not reign" (Calvin).

"He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103.10-12).

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. "Perfectionism has two causes: (1) the stifling of conscience: we make him a liar, i.e. turn a deaf ear to his inward testimony, his voice is not in our souls. (2) Ignorance of his Word: it is 'not in us.' Such a delusion would be impossible if we steeped our minds in the Scriptures" (Expositor's Greek Testament).

IV. CHRIST THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS, 2.1, 2. My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. The words of address express the aged prophet's loving interest in the welfare of his readers. "He assumes this

tone because he is about to address a warning to them, and he would fain take the sting out of it and disarm opposition. He foresees the possibility of a two-fold perversion of his teaching: (1) 'If we can never in this life be done with sin, why strive after holiness? It is useless; sin is an abiding necessity.' (2) 'If escape be so easy, why dread falling into sin? We may sin with light hearts, since we have the blood of Jesus to cleanse us.' 'No,' he answers, 'I am not writing these things to you either to discourage you in the pursuit of holiness or to embolden you in sinning, but, on the contrary, that you may not sin.' As a physician might say to his patient: 'Your trouble is obstinate; the poison is in your blood, and it will take a long time to eradicate it. But I do not tell you this to discourage you or make you careless; no, on the contrary, to make you watchful and diligent in the use of the remedy'; so the apostle says: 'My little children, these things I am writing to you in order that ye may not sin' " (Expositor's Greek Testament).

And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. The word Advocate means literally one who is called to the side of another for counsel and help. And he is the propitiation for our sins. "Propitiation is the act or offering which makes an injured person favorable to the offender. Christ is the propitiation as well as the propitiator: the offering itself as well as the sacrificing Priest who makes it. And Christ is the propitiation not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

V. FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, 2.3-6. "The apostle foresees a question which may be raised: 'How can I be assured that Christ is all this to me—my Propitiation, my Advocate? and how can I be assured that I have an abiding interest in him?' He answers: (1) We attain to personal and conscious acquaintance with Christ by observance of his commandments; (2) we attain to assurance of abiding union with him by walking even as he walked" (Expositor's Greek Testament).

A man's perfect obedience is the proof of perfect love, in him verily hath the love of God, that is, the redeeming love of God, been perfected, reached its perfect expression.

The proof that we know God is that we keep his commandments. The one who claims to have a knowledge of God, but fails to keep his commandments, John brands as a liar—the truth is not in him, he is blind to his own condition. Such a man may know much about God, his mind may have grasped many truths in regard to him, but if he has not learned to love and obey him, he does not know him. God is only known in his Son, and the proof of one's abiding in him, continuing in fellowship with him, his obedience to his commands, a striving to walk as he walked. " 'I know him' was the watchword of the false teachers, their reference being to an esoteric and barren intellectualism. But John uses 'know' in its large biblical sense as denoting the intimacy of moral fellowship and affection between man and God. Hence by its very nature, knowledge involved for man an effort to obey God's will and to imitate his spirit, religion which came short of this being unreal and false!"

"Recall Rembrandt's advice to his pupil Hoogstraten: 'Try to put well in practice what you already know; and in doing so you will, in good time, discover the hidden things which you inquire about.' To know about Christ, to understand the doctrine of his person and work is mere theory; we get to know him and to know that we know him by practice of his precepts" (David Smith).

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The First Epistle of John

Some time during the second or first decade before the second century, it is believed, the Apostle John wrote his First Epistle. It is not addressed to any church or individual, and it is commonly believed to have been a circular letter written to his disciples in the province of Asia, and especially to those at Ephesus, where he made his home after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

John had a definite purpose in all his writings. The purpose of his Gospel was to quicken faith, John 20.31. The purpose of his First Epistle was to strengthen faith, 1 Jn. 5.13.

The great theme of the First Epistle of John is fellowship with God. In the first chapter he tells us that God is light, and bids us walk in the light. In the second chapter he tells us that God is righteous, and the evidence of our divine sonship is

the doing of righteousness. In the third chapter he bids us hope that we shall hereafter be like God in Christ. Light, life, love are the great words of this letter.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Doubtless your class has more Pharisees than it has Publicans and Sinners. Do they need to discuss sin? John Wesley once preached to a congregation that was "at ease in Zion" a scathing discourse on the text, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of hell?" At the close of the service an irate member met the preacher and exclaimed, "Sir, such a sermon would have been suitable in Billingsgate—but it is highly improper here!" "If I had been in Billingsgate my text would have been, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,'" Wesley returned.

Dr. MacColl classifies the sins to which Christ was most sensitive thus: Sins of thought—envy, uncharitable judgment, evil desire; sins of Pharisaism—the pious tongue, the proud, selfish life; sins against little ones—the young, the sick in body or mind, the weak in achievement or will.

Boys and girls need help in living. They are facing as great temptations as they ever will face, and with but little experience and judgment to guide them. The problem of sin is a vital one, and today the wise leader will secure a frank discussion of sin and of the special temptations to sin which beset his class.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS
SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Beginning the Lesson

Sin is not a popular thing about which to talk. In a group of earnest, high-minded young people, the conversation turned upon a course of action of which all disapproved, but not one of them would call it a sin. They said, "It isn't the thing to do," or, "It isn't done." Why is this? Is the reluctance to call sin a sin due to the fact that young people are not honest with themselves, that they like to think themselves subject to influences beyond their control, and consider their own responsibility of action not very great? Our lesson text has some very plain words about sin: what are they? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Man's First Sin

In the first text assigned for our consideration today, Gen. 3.1-24, profound spiritual truths—the struggle between the powers of good and of evil, the fact of sin and its consequences, the relation of God to the individual, the workings of conscience—are embodied in pictorial language. "The man who recorded this third chapter of Genesis," Dr. George Adam Smith observes, "was not a simple scribe of some early traditions at which, in our superior wisdom, we can smile as at a story for children. He was the accurate and faithful recorder of his own heart, and you cannot gainsay the essential truthfulness of the account. After all the centuries of man's acquaintance with himself, after all the analysis of philosophy and ethics, we have hardly reached deeper than this ancient example of the mysteries and complications of the human heart."

Why Did not God Make Sin Impossible?

The answer is that God, who made the world and us, has so ordered our life that man proceeds from the worse to the better by the discipline of experience. It was in accordance with our best knowledge of God and of man that the Hebrews imagined the opportunity of a wrong choice in the Garden of Eden. Man had to have a chance to choose wrong in order that the right choice might be the expression, not of a will without him, but of his own will within him. By this choice he became a man. A world without liberty of choice would be a world of slaves or imbeciles. It would be a good world, because it would be compelled to be good; there would be no alternative. And being thus good, it would be spared much of the pain which now besets us. And it would be a world of peace. But peace at what a price! Man would have the blessing of peace at the cost of his own soul. Such a solution of the problem of pain is like a sudden blow on the head, after which we shall have no worry and no conscience, no will and no manhood, and shall sit smiling vacantly at the empty sky! Anything is better than this.—George Hodges, in Religion in a World at War.

The Stain of Sin

The power of sin can never run through a man's life without leaving its mark behind. Nothing in the world ever works without friction. A mountain torrent digs a glen in the mountain side; the sea cuts a beach along the shore; the hurricane leaves a thousand fallen witnesses behind to mark its track. And the great river of sin, as it rolls through a human life, leaves a pile of ruins here and there as melancholy monuments to show where it has been.

Prisons, mad-houses, hospitals—these are just so much roofing which society has put on to hide the stain of sin. It is a good thing in some ways that sin has always its stain. Just as pain is a good thing to tell that something is wrong, so the stain of sin may be a good thing to tell that the power has broken loose. Society might never trouble itself if it were not for the stain. And in dealing with the stain of sin it sometimes may do a very little to maim its power. But it is a poor, poor remedy. If it could only see the power and try to deal with that—try to get God's grace to act on that, the world might be redeemed from destruction, after all. But it only sees the stain when it is too late—the stain which has dropped from the wound after the throat of virtue has been cut. Surely, when the deed is done, it is the least it could do to remove the traces of the crime.

No one can possibly be blind to the stain of sin in bodily life. We see it in one another's lives, but more than that, we see it in one another's faces. Vice writes in plain characters, and all the world is its copybook. We can read it everywhere and on everything around, from pole to pole. The drunkard, to take the conspicuous example, so stains his bodily life with his sin that the seeds of disease are sown which, long after he has reformed, will germinate in his death. If all the drunkards in the world were to be changed tomorrow, the stains of sin in their bodies even would doubtless bring a large majority—in a few years, less or more—to what was after all really a drunkard's grave.

But the most solemn fact about this stain of sin is that so little can be done for it. It is almost indelible. There is a very solemn fact about this stain of sin—it can never be altogether blotted out. The guilt of sin may be forgiven, the power of sin may be broken, but the stains of sin abide. A cut limb may be cured, but the scar remains for ever. An earthquake is over in three minutes, but centuries after the ground is still rent into gulfs and chasms which ages will never close. So the scars of sin, on body and mind and soul, live with us in silent retribution for our past, and go with us to our graves.

And the stain does not stop with our lives. Every action of every man has an ancestry and a posterity in other lives. The stains of life have power to spread. The stains of other lives have crossed over into our lives, stains from our lives into theirs. "I am a part," says the Laureate, "of all that I have met." A hundred years hence we all must live again—in thoughts, in tendencies, in influences, perhaps in sins and stains in other lives. The sins of the father shall be visited on the children. The blight on the vicious parent shall be visited on the insane offspring. The stain on the intemperate mother shall reappear in the blasted lives of her drunken family. Finer forms of sin in the same way—of companion on companion, of brother or sister, of teacher and pupil. For God himself has made the law, that the curse must follow the breach; and even he who healeth our diseases may never interfere with the necessary stain of a sinful life.—Condensed from The Ideal Life, by Henry Drummond.

Sin's Polluting Nature

When some one in a family has scarlet fever, the Board of Health puts a staring red sign on the house and everybody who can possibly do so leaves the sick person to the care of a doctor or nurse, and keeps away from the house till the danger is over.

But men and women who are tainted with the contagion of sin move about among our dearest and best. It is true, the law says to the desperate criminal, to the burglar or the murderer or the assassin, "You cannot be allowed to endanger society." But there are thousands of forms of sin that are not classed as crimes, and the human laws never can punish or remove the sinner from society.

You cannot put a man in jail simply for being intensely selfish. And yet his selfishness may ruin the character of many young people. You cannot arrest and convict a man for drinking intoxicating liquors so long as he keeps sober, and yet his example may lead scores of other men into crime and ruin. You cannot bring a man into court and charge him with being dangerous to the human family because

he does not believe in the Bible or prayer or God. And yet his sin of unbelief may imperil the soul of your child or mine. You cannot shut a man up in an insane asylum because he is in the habit of laughing at religious things or telling indecent stories to young boys, or finding perpetual fault with Christian people. And yet such a man may be as dangerous to the spiritual life of a neighborhood as a maniac would be to its physical life. All crime is sin. But all sin is not crime in the eyes of society.

What an awfully selfish thing sin is! Not content to work out the destruction of the man who is possessed by it, sin always reaches out for those nearest and pollutes and disfigures and hurries into the way of destruction all others who come in contact with it. If we labeled all sinners with regular signs, as we label houses where there are contagious diseases, how many of us would be going about saying to society, as the lepers were obliged to cry, "Unclean! unclean! Come not nigh! I will certainly pollute you! Unclean! Unclean!"—Condensed from a Sermon by Charles M. Sheldon.

Face to Face with the Fruit of Sin

It was a very ingenious judge who devised the plan of taking an automobile speeder to the morgue to look on the lifeless form of his victim. It is said that this punishment is effective with the hardest of offenders. Probably no man would violate any law if he could see in advance the fruit of his sin. The food profiteer is a long way removed from the babies that do not have enough to eat. The clothing profiteer never sees the old women who shiver through the winter for the lack of the coats that he has denied them. The young man who sows wild oats is not able to visualize in advance the harm his deeds bring upon those he loves, nor to realize the undoing of himself to which his course of life inevitably leads. Sin means a defective spiritual imagination. It is in the very nature of wrongdoing that it substitutes the thing that is immediate for the thing that is more remote in time, the thing that is material for the reality that is spiritual. The nearest we may come to taking sinners to the morgue is for the preacher to set forth faithfully the effects of wrongdoing. That kind of preaching is never out of date. The faithful sermon may accomplish much that a realistic presentation might do.—The Christian Century.

The Wages of Sin Is Death

The terrible penalty for sin, says the Apostle in the first chapter of Romans, is not the pain it brings in the way of retribution. For indeed all pain has a tendency to purge: all retribution is merciful and indeed loving. No: the terrible penalty of our sin is its consequences. The loss it brings to us—the narrow life, the darkened conscience, the ability to be satisfied with the life of the senses, the dying out of the soul, the awful retreat and final departure of the very faculty by which we know ourselves to be something other than the brute that perisheth. That in St. Paul's view is the wages of sin—not punishment, but death. And so, in that chapter, speaking of the consequences of wrong ways of living, he uses such phrases as these: "Men received in themselves that recompense of their error which was due." "Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."

And again he says that by persisting in their evil courses men become "past feeling." They lose even their natural affection, and at last become not merely ignorant of God, but actually "haters of God."—Condensed from At Close Quarters, by John A. Hutton.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The mystery of sin. See Chapter I of The Battle of Life, by Phillips Brooks.

2. The Teaching of Jesus about Sin. See Chapter VII of The Jesus of History, by T. R. Glover.

3. The sense of sin in modern life. See Chapter VII of A Working Theology, by Alexander MacColl.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What did Jesus say about himself as the Good Shepherd? (John 10). 2. Explain our second text. 3. What are the words about the Savior in John 3.14-17? 4. What did Paul say about the Savior in Phil. 2.5-11 and 2 Tim. 1.9, 10? 5. Can we understand the Atonement? 6. What is our privilege and responsibility in regard to it?

FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

WHAT SIN IS AND DOES

Beginning the Lesson

Clement of Alexandria, who wrote at the close of the second century, tells this interesting story about John, the apostle whom Jesus loved.

John was living in Ephesus and had the oversight of all the Christian communities round about. One day he visited Smyrna and saw there a lad who greatly attracted him. "I deposit this lad in thy keeping with all earnestness, taking the Church and Christ to witness," he said to the bishop. The bishop accepted the trust, took the lad to his home and cared for him. Then the lad fell into evil company, committed a crime and escaped to the mountains where he became head of a band of brigands.

Later John revisited the city and said to the bishop: "Now then, bishop, restore us the deposit which the Savior and I entrusted thee. It is the lad that I am requiring, and the soul of the brother." The bishop wept as he replied, "He is dead!" "Dead! How? When? And what death?" "He is dead to God," said the bishop, as he told the story.

"A fine guardian of the brother's soul did I leave in thee!" the apostle cried as he rent his robe. "Let me have a horse forthwith and some one to show me the way." And he rode off and found the lost youth, and brought him back a penitent.

The apostle John was a very old man when he wrote this letter which we call The First Epistle of John. In it we see him as a father solicitous for the righteous welfare of his children. (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

What Is Sin?

There is one word that runs through the Greek New Testament, and it is most often translated "sin." It is a common word, *"hamartia."* What did the Greek word mean? It simply means *a missing of the mark.* In Greek literature that word is used in many ways. Let me give you an illustration or two.

The first and simplest use is this: An archer is seen with his bow in his hand, the arrow is upon the string, and he is bending his bow with his eye fixed upon a target. The string is released, the arrow flies; it does not hit the target, and the spectators say, *"Hamartia!"* It has missed the mark.

The Greeks used the word also in this way: they spoke of a man of genius who prostituted his genius to base uses as guilty of *hamartia,* missing the mark. We quite agree with them.

They used it also in the realm of logic. They said that if a man's premises were false or his deductions were false, he was guilty of *hamartia,* he was missing the mark. You have listened to a preacher sometimes, and when you went out you said, "Well, he missed the mark!" That is *hamartia,* missing the mark.

Now in the New Testament it is never used of the arrow that fails to hit the target, it is never used of the genius that is prostituted to base uses, it is never used of the false method of logic. It is always used in the moral realm,—failure to be that which one is intended to be, failure to arrive, failure to realize. The moment men come to the consciousness of the fact of their spiritual nature and begin to think in that realm they know they have missed the mark.—G. Campbell Morgan.

What Sin Does

The honeysuckle has a very sweet-smelling flower, and most people are very fond of it. It clings to the stems of trees, and twines itself round and round them, and holds on very tightly. You probably have seen ivy doing exactly the same thing. Both of these plants and others like them affect the tree to which they cling. I have seen a walking-stick all warped and twisted which was made from a branch of a tree round which a plant like this had twined itself. It looked just like a big irregularly made screw.

Now, when these plants really get a grip of a tree, one of two things happens in the long run. It may take many years to do it, but that does not alter the fact. Either the climber grips the tree so tightly that it chokes it, or the bark of the tree gradually overlaps the climber, which becomes buried in the growing folds of the bark, and is itself choked. The climber kills the tree, or the tree kills the climber.

Just in the same way sin grips boys and girls and men and women, and twines itself round them. It twists and warps them, and gives their lives a very ugly appearance. And if they allow it to grow it will choke all that is good and beautiful and true and worthy in their character and life. Either you must choke sin, or sin

will choke you. Which is it to be? That is the most important question for everyone, even the youngest. Will you kill sin, or will you allow it to kill you? If you are going to kill it, you must go to the Lord Jesus and ask him to help you. He will give you the power to do it.—W. S. Herbert Wylie, in Nature Studies.

How Sin Grows

Throughout New England and elsewhere magnificent old elms have been destroyed by the gypsy moth. The government has spent millions of dollars in an effort to rid the land of these pests which were brought here a few years ago from China. An American traveling in China conceived the idea that from the cocoons which the gypsy moths spin he might learn to make artificial silk, and he brought some moths back with him to experiment upon. Through his carelessness a few moths escaped, and they began to breed and multiply until there was a whole army of them working their havoc with our trees.

A rector in New York City (Walter Russell Bowie) sees in the way in which this evil grew, a lesson for you. "Sometimes boys and girls," he says, "do with small sins what that man did with the gypsy moth. They play with them, and experiment with them, and do not know that harm will come. 'Here is a little lie,' one says, 'but it is only a little one. Besides, I may get some advantage from it. This little bit of cheating may help me get a better mark in school. This little thing which I say that I have done or have not done may make someone think better of me, so that he will give me something which I want.' As the man who brought in the gypsy moth had the notion that the moth might spin for him some artificial silks, so one of us may think that the little lie can spin for him a result he wants. But the first thing we know, the evil which we are playing with flies away, and then it begins to multiply, and presently we are astonished to discover that it is doing more damage than we can catch up with and stop in a long, long time. In the Old Testament there is a warning against 'the little foxes that spoil the vines.' There might be a warning against the little moths that spoil the trees. And all the Bible is full of warnings against little sins, that once let loose may spoil our lives."

The Scars Remain

My boyhood home was not far south of the great chain of North American Lakes. Our fuel was poles cut from a neighboring tamarack swamp. It was my business, after they had been brought to our yard, to saw them to proper length for the stoves. They were long and slick and hard to hold. One morning when I was in a hurry to go off fishing, they seemed to be especially aggravating. Getting the saw fast, I jerked about until finally I plunged the teeth some distance into one of my feet, making an ugly gash. My father saw the exhibition of my temper, but wisely said nothing until I had finished my work and my passion had subsided. Then he called me to him.

"John," said he, very kindly—he never spoke to me in any other way—"I wish you would get the hammer." "Yes, sir." "Now a nail and a piece of pine board from the woodshed." "Here they are." "Will you drive the nail into the board?" It was done. "Please put it out again." "That's easy." "Now, John," and my father's voice dropped to a lower, sadder key, "pull out the nail hole."

While, of course, I saw the application to my fit of anger, I did not then understand as I do now how every wrong act leaves a scar. There is no power to pull the nail holes out. Even if the board were a living tree, yes, a living soul, the scars remain—the old nerve tracks, the physical basis of the former sins.—John B. DeMotte, in The Secret of Character Building.

Sentence Sermons

Sin and happiness certainly do not travel on the same car, for they are not journeying on the same road.—New York Observer.

Sin and penalty go through the world with their heads tied together.—Plato.

Sin grows rapidly, and after a small beginning takes wide steps.—Wisdom of Sirach.

Sin carrieth two rods about it, shame and fear.—Edward Marbury.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is a parable? 2. Is there anyone who "needs no repentance"? What did Jesus mean by this? 3. Jesus once said, "How much better is a man than a sheep"; where is this saying found, and in what connection? (See a Bible Concordance.) 4. Tell the story of the Good Shepherd of Jn. 10.1-11. 5. Repeat John 3.16.

LESSON III—JANUARY 20

CHRIST THE SAVIOR

GOLDEN TEXT: And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. Matthew 1.21

LESSON Luke 2.11, 30-32; 15.3-7; John 3.14-17; 10.9-11, 14-16, 27, 28; Acts 3.1-18; Romans 5.1-11; Philippians 2.5-11; 2 Timothy 1.9, 10.
DEVOTIONAL READING Isaiah 53.4-9

LUKE 15.3 And he spake unto them this parable, saying, 4 What man of you, having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? 5 And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and his neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. 7 I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, *more* than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance.

ROMANS 5.6 For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath *of God* through him. 10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE VALUE OF A REPENTANT SINNER, Lk. 15.3-7. To the Pharisees and scribes who criticized Jesus for receiving sinners and eating with them, Jesus said: "Is there a man among you who, if he possessed a hundred sheep and found one missing, would not leave the ninety-nine in the pasture lands and search for the lost sheep until he found it?" By the word translated *wilderness* is meant the uninhabited lands which were the pasture lands.

"The sheep may shiver with terror and cold when it no longer sees the flock, no longer hears the guiding voice of the shepherd, but it is only the shepherd who knows all that is involved in its position, only the shepherd knows the risks. We sometimes speak of man's infinite loss through sin, and I do not know that we can exaggerate it; but, after all, we do not realize it, even in a measure, until we view from the side of God the poverty and deformity of the Christless soul" (Thomas Stewart).

When the shepherd finds the lost sheep, he puts it across his shoulders (the easiest way in which to carry it), and returns rejoicing. So great is his joy that he must have others share it, and he calls together his friends and neighbors and bids them rejoice with him.

Grief can take care of itself, says Mark Twain, but to get the full value of a joy we must have some one with whom to divide it.

If you would be so careful and tender of one lost sheep, how much more careful and tender must the Good Shepherd be of the lost sheep of Israel? "I say unto you," said Jesus, "that even as in the case of this human shepherd there will be joy with God and his angels over one sinner that repents, more than over the ninety and nine righteous persons (such as the Pharisees regarded themselves, Lk. 18.9) who (as they think) need no repentance." Dr. W. L. Watkinson points out three facts in this verse: (1) the significance of the individual—over *one* sinner; (2) the importance of the individual lies in his moral life—one *sinner;* (3) the most important event in the individual life is the restoring of the lapsed soul to God—one sinner that *repenteth.*

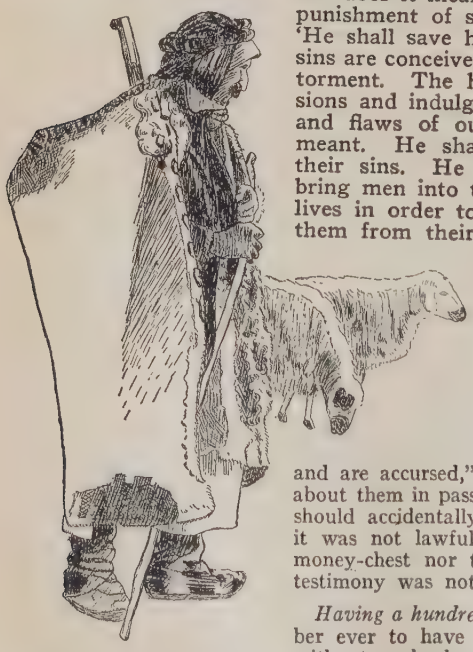
"Here in this parable is the great mystery of the divine love, the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Here is the answer by anticipation of the sarcasm that is often leveled at evangelical Christianity: 'You must think a good deal of human nature, and must have a very arrogant notion of the inhabitants of this little speck that floats in the great sea of the heavens, if you suppose that with all these millions of orbs, the divine nature came down upon this little tiny molehill, and took your nature and died!'

"'Yes!' says Christ, 'not because man was so great but because he was so wretched, because he was so small, because he had gone so far away from God; therefore, the seeking love came after him and would draw him to itself'" (Alexander Maclaren).

II. THE ATONEMENT OF CHRIST, Rom. 5.6-10. For while we were yet sinful, morally weak, and the need was great, Christ died for sinners. For scarcely will one die for a just (righteous) man; though possibly for the more lovable good man some one would even dare to die. But God far surpasses this utmost manifestation of human love, and shows the excellence of his own love toward us by the death of Christ for us while we were yet sinners. "If such grace was shown us then, when we were in sin, much more, justified as we have now been by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath to come through him. As sinners, we lay under the condemnation of God, and his wrath hung over us. This was the situation which had to be faced: Was there love in God equal to it? Yes, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, then, shall the love which wrought so incredibly for us in our extremity carve out our salvation to the end. The Living Lord, in virtue of his life, will save us to the uttermost" (James Denny).

The One Volume Commentary paraphrases these verses thus: We are right in trusting utterly to such love as God revealed by the death of Christ. Its like has never been known among men, for we were not good, but sinful, when Christ died for us. In view of this, we may trust him to save us to the end. For if God sacrificed his Son for his enemies, he will surely save his friends.

"Our Lord is called Jesus, which means 'He shall save'; but it means he will save from our sins. That is the interpretation given. And 'saved from our sins' does not, of course, mean merely saved from the guilt of sin; nor does it mean saved from the penalty or the punishment of sin, but it means what it says—'He shall save his people from their sins.' The sins are conceived of as a disease, a disorder, or a torment. The habits which fetter us, the passions and indulgences which defile us, the faults and flaws of our character—these are what is meant. He shall save his people from these, their sins. He died on the cross in order to bring men into the state of being saved; but he lives in order to save them; he lives to deliver them from their sins, as a direct personal, all-powerful Savior" (R. F. Horton).



A Shepherd of Palestine

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

All the publicans and sinners were drawing near to him, Lk. 15.1. The Pharisees spoke of publicans and sinners as "this multitude which knoweth not the law, and are accursed," and they drew their robes closely about them in passing the latter on the street lest they should accidentally touch them. They declared that it was not lawful to change money at a publican's money-chest nor to receive alms from him, and his testimony was not accepted in the courts.

Having a hundred sheep, Lk. 15.3. I do not remember ever to have seen in the East a flock of sheep without a shepherd. In such a landscape as Judea, where pasture is thinly scattered over an unfenced tract of country, covered with delusive paths, still frequented by the wild beasts, and rolling off into the desert, the man is indispensable to his flock. On some high moor, across which at night the hyenas howl, when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, armed, leaning on his staff and looking out over his scattered sheep, every one of them on his heart, you understand

why Christ took him as the type of self-sacrifice.—George Adam Smith, in The Historical Geography of the Holy Land.

There shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, Lk. 15.7. There was a saying of the Pharisees that "There is joy before God when those who provoke him perish from the world."

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Background of Luke 15.3-7

The parable of the Lost Sheep, or of the Seeking Shepherd, as I like to call it, is given by Matthew to teach his disciples that, like the Good Shepherd, their love must lead them to seek to reclaim those who go astray. In Luke the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, the Lost Son form a series about the lost which Jesus was led to utter because of the murmuring of the Pharisees and Scribes over his reception of sinners.

The Background of Romans 5.6-10

As we learned in our studies last year, it was towards the close of his stay at Corinth that Paul wrote his letter to the Christians at Rome. His eyes were turned westward, and he purposed going there after he had gone to Jerusalem with the collection for the poor which had been given by the Gentile churches of Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

The shepherd leaves the ninety and nine to go out and seek the one. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. The value of the individual! Over and over again we may learn this lesson from Jesus' life and teaching. Dr. Arnold had many boys at Rugby, but he never lost his appreciation of the worth of each one. "If ever I could receive a new boy from his father without emotion," he said on one occasion, "I should think it was high time to be off." Have you ever wondered if it were worth while to spend time and trouble for a small group of pupils? Has a stormy Sunday found you with only a few pupils, even only one pupil, present, and did you count that day a failure? Lymann Abbott exchanged pulpits with a country minister one Sunday when a severe storm kept every one at home save one man. For that one listener he preached and omitted no detail of the service. The man went away without stopping to speak with him; was it all lost effort? But twenty years later a stranger in another State recalled the circumstance to him. "That sermon saved my soul," the stranger said, "and made a minister of me. Yonder is my church; the converts of that sermon are all over Ohio!"

The shepherd with ninety and nine safely housed went out for the one lost sheep. Not content unless he can bring them all into the fold, the church-school teacher goes after the wandering, the irregular, the wayward pupil, looks him up when absent, visits him when sick, and uses his utmost endeavor not to lose one of those intrusted to his spiritual guidance. And when he has found him, he rejoices.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

CHRIST, THE WORLD'S REDEEMER

Beginning the Lesson

Our first printed selection is the well-known parable of the Lost Sheep. We need not tarry long with this portion of Scripture, but a lesson thought which Dr. Alexander Maclaren derives from it is well worth a moment's consideration. The sheep did not intend to go anywhere, either to keep with or to leave the shepherd. "It simply knew that grass was sweet, and that there, ahead of it, was another tuft, and it went after that. So it nibbled itself away out of the path, out of the shepherd's care, out of the flock's companionship. It was heedless; and therefore it was lost. Now that is a fair statement of facts in regard to thousands of men. They do not intend any mischief, they have no purpose of rebellion or transgression, but they live what we call animal lives. The sheep knows only where the herbage is abundant and fresh; and it goes there. An animal has no foresight, and is the happier because it cannot look before and after. It has only a rudimentary conscience, if it has that. Its inclinations are restrained by no sense of obligation. Many men live just so, without restraint upon appetite, without checking of inclination, without foresight except of the material good which a certain course of conduct may get. So, all

unwittingly, meaning no mischief, they wander farther and farther from the right road, and find themselves at last in a waterless desert."

Jesus Christ Was Offered for the Sins of the World

When the monk, Telemachus, plunged into the gladiatorial games at the Colosseum and died, bringing those gladitorial shows for ever to an end, what an extraordinary effect it produced! When I stand in that vast ring of the Colosseum and contemplate the tiers of seats and the arena where those deeds of blood were wrought, I cannot think of all the tortures and atrocities for thinking of that monk Telemachus—his little deed of sacrifice and death literally covers up and blots out the whole tale of the tragedies of the Colosseum.

Or when we read of the life and sacrifice of Damien in ministering to the lepers—a life laid down for the lepers—it seems to us all as if that justified the existence of leprosy from the beginning, as if the whole mystery of that dark suffering of the human body is explained by the fact that a man, for love's sake, will die to minister to the lepers.

Now this is what I mean by the virtue of this self-offering of Jesus. As I gaze on this, and as the mists begin to clear, and I see the cross on which my Savior died, I realize not only that by my faith in him I am pardoned and saved, but also that every human being, the whole multitude of mankind from the beginning to the end, may be forgiven, too. I realize that when he, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God, there was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; and because I am forgiven for his sake, the world can be forgiven. And it seems to me that there is nothing else worth doing but just to pass on the glad tidings, to tell men everywhere to repent and to believe, because Jesus Christ was offered for the sins of the world, and whosoever believeth in him is forgiven.—Condensed from How the Cross Saves, by Robert F. Horton.

A Theory of the Atonement to which All Can Subscribe

I remember what my conception about the atonement was when I was a boy. I thought that God was a strict and solemn and awful king, who was very angry because men had broken his law. He was just, and his justice had no mercy in it. Christ, his Son, was much better-natured and more compassionate, and he came forth into our world to suffer upon the cross that God's justice might relax a little, and his heart be opened to forgive our race. I supposed that that was the teaching of the hymns in the hymn-book, if not of the preachers. And when I became a young man, I supposed that that was the teaching of the Christian religion.

My heart rebelled against it. I would not accept it. A man cannot accept an interpretation of God that does not appeal to the best that is in him. No man can accept a doctrine that darkens his moral sense, or that confuses the distinction between right and wrong. I shall never forget how, one evening in his study, a minister explained to me the meaning of the reconciliation. He assured me that God is love, invisible, eternal. Christ, his Son, is also love. In becoming at one with the Son we become at one with the Father. This is the at-one-ment. And when that truth broke upon me my heart began to sing.—Charles E. Jefferson.

The Gospel of the Cross

The fact of the atonement, the greatest of all facts, is that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself; to this sublime statement of the fact nothing need ever be added. Every theory of the fact, as to how God was in Christ, as to how reconciliation was or is effected, as to the relative value of his life, his words, his death, is, comparatively, of minor importance; the eternal destinies of a soul will never depend upon his grasping of an intellectual proposition or his fathoming the relations of the infinite God and his Christ. Yet every theory helps which makes vivid even to a single man the fact; when through it reconciliation with God in Christ becomes real and creative, every such theory has surely caught some fringe of the garment of Christ.

The man, for instance, whose life is stained with the blighting memory of sin and shame, upon whose soul lies heavily the bitter weight of years misspent, of lives ruined, or wrongs that never can be righted, rejoices to see in the death of the Divine Master, sent into the world by the Father, going freely to the cross for men, the pledge of sin forgiven. At the cross his burden falls away; the living Christ has taken it from him; he feels sure that even for him the way is forever open to the Father.

Another has lived a life outwardly clean and correct. His experience has been

the gradual unfolding of the powers within him, a deepening desire to know the larger meanings of his life as they are revealed in Christ, and to enter into them. To him the gospel of the cross is that Divine Love has made the race struggle his own, identified himself with human need to the limit of sacrificial love. His great joy is not that Christ has borne his sin, but that he has called him to be a sharer in his great world-burden. Beneath the shadow of the cross, he has passed from anxiety about personal salvation, and speculation about theories of representation, to the loving labors of the Christ. The cross is to him an impulse more than a refuge.

Another emphasizes the sacramental view. He thinks of Christ's work as in him rather than for him. In his own strength he must fail. The very life of Christ must be given to him, if he is to win his battle and live a truly Christian life. But ere Christ's life can be given to men it must be poured forth; on the cross he beholds it freely given for men; the Lord's Supper, recalling his death, is the perpetual pledge that it is his who sincerely hungers for the bread of life.

Yet another cannot separate in his thought the death of Christ from his life and his words. To him the incarnation, the entrance of God in Christ into human life, is the beginning of the cross. He does not depreciate Calvary; he extends and prolongs it immeasurably. But he cannot think of the cross as a single event in time; to him it is an age-long sacrifice, not a momentary surrender, a divine life-work, not an infinite transaction. He speaks of the atoning life more than of the atoning death. To him it seems that Christ is still being borne to the cross; the thought of Sigismund Goetz's great picture possesses his soul; he seems to see the Master being crucified afresh not only on the steps of St. Paul's cathedral today (as the picture suggests), but wherever men are deaf to his appeals, false to their true selves and their fellows, blind to the rich meanings of their lives.

So one might go on indefinitely. All human theories are partial and inadequate. The theory for every man is the theory that makes vivid to him the fact, the theory that warms his love for Christ, and quickens his impulse to serve him. There may be crude thinking, but if there is an open mind and a responsive will, the Spirit will guide him into the larger truth. But there must be no mistake about the fact. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Reconciliation involves separation, antagonism. Man self-governed is alienated from God. Sin is separation from the Infinite above and the Infinite within. The gospel of the cross is that in Jesus Christ the gulf is bridged; through him God comes to man; through him man comes to God, and to himself.—Condensed from A Working Theology, by Alexander MacColl.

A Merely Human Christ Could not Save Us

A great deal of our religious thought and teaching is turned to the example of Christ as the model and pattern of true manhood. And we rejoice in this, because it is a high and noble doctrine. But let us not forget that if it stands alone it is partial and incomplete. The force of an example, however lofty, has its limits. The life of Christ as an ideal falls short of the power to save us and uplift us unless it is also a ransom, a life freely given and sacrificed for us.

If he were our example only, his very elevation above us, the purity and splendor of his character, the perfection of his moral triumph compared with our feeble and sinful lives, would discourage and cast us down.

As well ask a common man to show the genius of a Dante or a Shakespeare, to exercise the power of a Cæsar or a Charlemagne, as to live the life of Christianity with nothing but an example to guide and find him. But because that life is something more, because it is given and sacrificed for us, it becomes a vital and spiritual power, it lays hold of us at the very center of our being. While it covers our sins and shortcomings, it awakens our longings and desires. It sets us free to follow it, and to follow it to success.—Henry van Dyke, in Six Days of the Week.

"I Will Draw All Men unto Myself"

An immense electromagnet was built recently by an industrial corporation in order to save waste pieces of iron and steel. It was placed on a flat car and sent over the tracks that ran through the shops and foundries, and covered acres of yard in every direction.

The result was astonishing. When the crane that supported the magnet was swung out and the electric current turned on, the magnet drew pieces of metal from the piles of dust and rubbish that proved to be the "missing parts" of machines long since given over for lost. Elsewhere the ground was seen to swell and crack, and

after the earth had been loosened with pick and shovel, the magnet drew out the "buried mistakes" that workmen had hurriedly concealed from the eyes of foremen and superintendents. Even the "insignificant" and apparently worthless sparks from the chimneys and rust flakes from the pig iron were gathered up by the magnet and restored to usefulness.

Just so does God's Magnet, Jesus Christ, gather to himself from the waste heaps of humanity and restore to useful service those who have been missing from their rightful places in home, society, and church, those whose former lives have been woeful mistakes, and those who have come to think of themselves as too insignificant to be of any use in the complex life of today.

No one is beyond the uplifting power of Jesus. He still draws all kinds of men unto himself.—The Youth's Companion.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. It is not the fact that Christ died so much as the fact that it was Christ who died that is important.—W. B. Selbie.

2. Christ's passion and death were not needed to reconcile God to man, but to bring men to God.—Thomas Nelson Page.

3. There is but one result that can warrant the agony of Calvary, and that is our being conquerors over sin.—Mark Guy Pearse.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Why was it expedient that Christ should go away? 2. What is the doctrine of the Trinity? 3. What are the names used for the Holy Spirit in the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth chapters of John's Gospel? 4. What counsel does Paul give the Thessalonians in regard to the Holy Spirit? (1 Thess. 5.19.) 5. Who is the Holy Spirit? 6. What is his mission? 7. What are some of the ways in which he speaks to us? 8. What is the difference between having the Spirit and being possessed by the Spirit?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

HOW JESUS SAVES US

Beginning the Lesson

Who told the parable of our lesson? What is the parable? What truth does Jesus draw from it? Does the lost sheep know its danger as well as the shepherd does? (Explanations and Comments.) How did the Shepherd show his great care for the sheep? How did the Great Shepherd show his care and love for each one of us? What does John 3.16 say?

Jesus Lived and Died for Us

Almost as soon as people had sinned they began to try how they might make up for it; very much as when we have hurt somebody's feelings and wish to make friends again. There seemed to be only two ways open for those who felt really concerned about it: either they must inflict some severe punishment upon themselves, or else they must give up something in their possession of which they thought a good deal and that therefore might prove pleasing to the one who had been offended. Even among people who have heard something about Jesus Christ there are still those who chastise themselves severely in order to atone for their sins; while sacrifices of some sort are offered in many heathen countries.

This shows that people have always felt the wrongness of sin and the existence of some one above them to whom they were responsible. But there was one thing people out of their own minds had not thought out, and which even today they are not thinking out: that God planned to send his own Son to atone for the sins of men. God's ways, you see, are higher than our ways. No man except the Son of God who became man, could do this for others, because all the rest of us could not even do it fully for ourselves.—Gerrit Verkuyl, in Scripture Memory Work.

Words about the Savior Spoken by Himself

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. . . . For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. . . . I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. . . . Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. . . . The Son of Man

came to give his life a ransom for many. . . . This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. . . . I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto myself. . . . Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

God Hath Sent his Only Begotten Son into the World that we Might Live through Him

Several little boys were trying to measure on the wall how much they loved their mother. The two older ones had placed their marks, when the youngest one looked at their marks in despair, and said, "Mamma, I love more than I can reach." So God loves us more than language can express, or the human mind conceive.

We often measure a person's love by his gift. Suppose that we apply this matter-of-fact method to God's gift. A little boy awoke bright and early on Christmas morning and found a beautiful bicycle with his name upon it. He was wild with joy. His younger brother said to him, "Uncle John sent it to you." "No, he didn't," was the reply. "Then it came from Cousin Joe," was the younger boy's second venture. "I'm sure it didn't," came from the happy recipient of the gift; "it must have come from mother, for no one else loves me enough to give me anything that cost as much as this.—Ernest E. Dager.

How Jesus Saves Us

You have seen the picture called The Big Parade. You will recall the scene when the three friends lying in a dugout receive the order to destroy an enemy machine-gun which is menacing many lives. One of the three insists upon going alone to destroy it, and in doing this he loses his life. He lays down his life to save his friends. You could understand how his friends felt; how with hearts filled with love for the self-sacrificing friend, their own service and lives seemed all too small to give in return for his love and devotion and sacrifice.

This experience, which was common to many in the Great War, helps us to realize how Jesus saves us all. He saves us because he loves us. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And he came to show us the love of God for us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world . . . that the world should be saved through him."

Probably no one of you can realize how deeply your own father and mother love you, how much they would do for you. And far less do we realize the love of God for us. God knew how easily men are led astray, how little they care for him, and so he sent his Son to teach us to think of God as our Father and to show us how to live.

By his death on the cross Jesus saves us from sin and the power of sin; and by his life, too, he saves us. For as we see his life of love and devotion and service, his submission to the will of God even to the point of death, our hearts are filled with love for him and desire to be like him.

In one of the great eastern monasteries there hangs a picture of the Son of God suffering on the cross. It is a moving picture, and under it are these words,

"This I have done for thee,
What hast thou done for me?"

In the words of Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall: "It comes close to your life and to mine, and, if we understand its meaning, the most natural thing for us to say is the very thing Paul said when he began to understand the meaning of it: 'The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.' And what did Paul do when he began to understand that the Son of God loved him and had given himself to him? Why, he simply said: To this loving Son of God I want to give my life. I want to put my life in his hands and let him do with me anything he pleases."

"And I, if I Be Lifted up from the Earth, Will Draw All Men to Myself"

Who said that? (Jn. 12.23.) What did he mean? It was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and he meant that if he was put to death on the cross it would be because he loved us, and was willing to die to save our souls from eternal death, as that is the result of sin. This fact would be told all over the world in time, and throughout all the centuries to follow, and would attract all peoples to him. And that story, preserved in the Gospels, and showing the love of God for sinners, is actually lifting our race up to his moral level.

Now, I can not explain the power that enables our Savior to do this, but I know that he does it. We call it love, and read about it in John 3.16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

There are some wonderful things about the power of love. Did you ever feel the "pull" of a kite string, when your kite was sailing far up in the air—so far that you could hardly see it? Well, Christ pulls on your heart and conscience, and if you will only take notice you will feel it; and if you have faith to believe it is he that is pulling you toward him, as you believe it is the kite that is causing the string to pull, he will draw you to him. A great multitude of people have this experience, and you can have it, too.—William A. Carver.

Accept Christ as Your Savior

What shall we expect of you girls and boys? This—that you shall now come consciously to realize that in Jesus all your bright ideals are embodied. In earlier years you have admired Abraham's generosity, Joseph's nobility, Joshua's courage, Ruth's loyalty, and have said, perhaps unconsciously, "I, too, desire to be generous, noble and strong." Years of training have given you ideals which were never so high as now they are. Here you stand on the threshold of years fraught with new possibilities and new dangers. What is there that will carry you through safely, and more than safely, gloriously? What is there that will set free your highest energies and fill your lives with deep content? What but this—that you shall now come to see, with new vividness, that the abundant life for which you yearn is to be found without alloy in but one Figure in all history's pages: he is the Deep which calls to the deep within you. He is the Hero for whom you have longed. He is the Leader to whose service your noblest powers may be pledged. He is the Savior of whom alone you can say,

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

If a decision to accept the leadership of Christ in such a sense as this can be made, then your life will be ennobled by the expulsive force of this great affection. The ideal place for the making of the decision is the quiet room at home where none but God is nigh.—Adapted from The Torch, by J. Lovell Smith.

Sentence Sermons

The size of God's family does not affect the preciousness of the individual soul.—J. H. Jowett.

"If the life of Christ be not your pattern, the death of Christ will not be your pardon."

Brother, for thee he died,
The King that reigneth now,
And hath Death's crown of pride
To ring his brow.
Yea, on that bitter tree
For thee his eyes grew dim.
Brother, he died for thee;
Live thou to him.—Frederick Longbridge.

May the constraining memories of his cross and the love wherewith he has loved each one of us, lead us at this hour to hand ourselves over to Christ wholly, irrevocably, and gladly, henceforth to do his will and not our own.—John R. Mott.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. When did Jesus speak the words of John 16.7-11? 2. What does the word *expedient* mean? 3. Who wrote Romans? 4. To whom did Jesus say in Lk. 11.13 that the Heavenly Father would give the Holy Spirit? 5. What is said about the Holy Spirit as a Teacher in Jn. 14.26; 16.13, 14? 6. What does Paul tell the Galatians in Gal. 5.22, 23 is the fruit of the Spirit?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

GOLDEN TEXT: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. Romans 8.14

LESSON Joel 2.28, 29; Luke 11.9-13; John 3.5-8; 14.16; 17, 26; 15.26, 27; 16.7-15; Acts 2.1-21, 32, 33; Romans 8.1-17, 26, 27; 1 Corinthians 12.1-13; Ephesians 1.13, 14; 3.14.21; 4.1-6, 30. DEVOTIONAL READING John 14.25-31

JOHN 16.7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you. 8 And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; 11 of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged.

ROMANS 8.12 So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh: 13 for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Ab'-bà Father. 16 The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: 17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him,* that we may be also glorified with *him.*

26 And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for *us* with groanings which cannot be uttered; 27 and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL DO, John 16.7-11. Jesus told his disciples that it was expedient for them, it was for their advantage, for their best interests, that he should leave them. How could it be best for them to lose the daily companionship of their Lord and Master? Jesus gives the answer: "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you." The Greek verb from which the Greek noun *Parakletos,* Paraclete, is derived, means *to call to aid;* the noun, therefore, stands for one who is called to another's aid, whether to comfort (The Comforter), to plead his cause (The Advocate), or to help in some other way (The Helper). The word *Comforter* used here for *Parakletos* means One who strengthens, upholds, rather than One who consoles.

The Holy Spirit is (1) the continued life and presence of Christ himself. While he was present with the disciples in the body, his humanity obscured in a measure his divinity. When the Holy Spirit took his place he revealed Christ to them, made plain all the spiritual truth of his teachings (verse 13). They knew him better after he had left them. (2) While Jesus was with them, they were weak men, unable to stand alone. After he went away and left them as witnesses to carry on his work, they became towers of strength, wonderful leaders of men, who continued to do all that he began both to do and to teach. (3) By leaving a few, Christ became the Companion of all. While he was on earth he was with a few men in a small land; now he is with all, everywhere, at all times. He is the universal Spiritual Presence.

> "He to his own a Comforter shall send,
> The promise of the Father, who shall dwell
> His Spirit within them, and the law of faith,
> Working through love, upon their hearts shall write
> To guide them in all truth" (Milton).

"We have no outside, distant, occasional Savior, as the disciples had long ago; but his Spirit, his other Self, to abide with us, in us, today, tomorrow, forever" (Maltbie D. Babcock).

When the Holy Spirit is come, he will convict, convince, the world of sin; . . . of sin, because they believe not on me. He will convince men that it is sin not to believe on Christ; compare Jn. 15.22, 24.

Perhaps you have watched an experiment by which the agency of the air

in producing sound is proved. Inside a glass globe a silver bell is suspended by a spiral spring and set in motion, and the ringing of the bell is clearly heard. Then, by means of an air-pump attached to the globe, the air is gradually withdrawn; the sound of the bell's ringing grows fainter and fainter; at last the air is exhausted, and though you can see the tongue of the bell striking against the sides of the globe, you can hear no sound whatever. Just as the air is necessary within the globe to produce the phenomenon of sound, so the presence of the Spirit of God within our hearts is necessary to convict us of sin, to teach and to guide us.

And of righteousness—because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more. "The Holy Spirit will convince mankind that Christ is a sincere and righteous Teacher, and not, as had been thought, an impostor; as will be clearly demonstrated when the Father has raised him from the dead and set him at his right hand in heaven."

"The great truths are never apprehended while the great teachers of those truths are living to expound them. The death of a great teacher deepens and disseminates the knowledge of the truth. It was so with the death of Christ. It has been so with the death of every great teacher since Christ died. For the truth is always greater than the individual expounder of it—deeper, higher, broader, larger. The Reformation is a great deal broader than Luther; and Calvinism is a great deal larger than John Calvin; Methodism is immeasurably more than Wesley; and in a true sense Christianity is more than Jesus of Nazareth—not more than Christ, but more than Jesus of Nazareth. While Christ lived in Palestine, Christianity could not run beyond the bounds of his individual influence—the words he uttered, the presence he carried. It was not until he died that the truth and the life which he inspired could have free course and go everywhither" (Lyman Abbott).

And of judgment (condemnation) . . . because the prince of this world (Satan) hath been judged. "Did not sin in Caiaphas, in the rulers, in Pilate, in the soldiers, in the multitude, uncoil itself as if by an irresistible impulse, and at last exhibit its whole terrible length? We say sin was exposed on that day—'judged,' said Christ; 'the prince of this world has been judged,' not punished, but exposed and condemned, judged as a prisoner in court is judged when he is found guilty and sentenced as a criminal, even before the hand of the law takes him from the bar" (Thomas E. Bartlett).

II. THE BODY THE SERVANT OF THE SPIRIT, Romans 8.12, 13. So, then, brethren: see The Historical Background. We are debtors, we are under moral obligation, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh, "that is, to obey the dictations of the flesh without reference to the claims of the spirit." Well, then, my brothers, we owe a duty—but it is not to the flesh! It is not to live by the flesh (Moffatt's translation). For if ye live after the flesh, ye must die, your spiritual nature will die; but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live. "Dust thou art, to dust returnest, was not spoken of the soul."

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES US THE FILIAL SPIRIT, verses 14, 15. For the sons of God are those who are guided by the Spirit of God (Moffatt's translation). Those have a right to consider themselves the sons of God who prove the relationship by their obedience.

There is a difference between having the Spirit and being possessed by the Spirit. To use an illustration given by Dr. John Douglas Adam, the trees have life in winter as well as in summer, even though the branches are bare, but in summer they have abundant life; so some men have the Spirit, and others are possessed by the Spirit; and the problem is to turn the fact of men having the Spirit into the greater fact of the Spirit having the men.

For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. *Abba* is an Aramaic word meaning *Father.* "When you were under the law, and went about as a slave to keep the law, you feared punishment; but since you have been freed, you are like a little son who goes in with familiarity and talks to his father, ready to do what

ever the father wants him to do. There is no spirit of slavery now, but the spirit of filial obedience, delighting in the Father's presence" (A. C. Dixon). The practice of adopting sons was common among the Greeks and Romans, but was unknown to the Jews. "We have but a faint conception of the force with which such an illustration would speak to one familiar with the Roman practice; how it would serve to impress upon him the assurance that the adopted son of God becomes, in a peculiar and intimate sense, one with the Heavenly Father" (Merivale, quoted by Vincent).

A converted heathen could not grasp this thought of being a son of God. He was translating into his native tongue the words of 1 John 3.1: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God." He translated thus: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should kiss his feet." The missionary told him he had made a mistake, but the native answered, "O, to be called 'children of God,' that is too much!" But, wonderful as it is, it is true, for we have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT PROVES TO US THAT WE ARE CHILDREN AND HEIRS, verses 16, 17. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, our consciences, that we are children of God. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God, 1 Jn. 3.1. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. "There is no inheritance without sonship, there is no sonship without spiritual birth, there is no spiritual birth without Christ, and there is no Christ for us without faith" (Alexander Maclaren). If so be that we suffer wth him, that we may be also glorified with him. Suffering, Paul perceives, is the common lot of all; as our Lord suffered, so must we suffer *with him;* but the witness of the Spirit is that through sharing in his suffering we shall come to share in his glory.

V. THE SPIRIT INTERCEDES FOR US, verses 26, 27. The Spirit helps our infirmity, our ignorance in our prayer-life, for the Spirit makes intercessions for us with unutterable groans. "Discontent with sin, or aspirations after holiness, may by its very intensity fail to get adequate utterance, yet in it God's own Spirit is pleading with God in our behalf. There may be acceptable and effective prayer without words. Must not all intense desire exceed its possible expression?" (A. E. Garvie).

Man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart (1 S. 16.7); and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints, the people of God, according to the will of God.

"The Holy Spirit supports our helplessness. Left to ourselves we do not know what prayers to offer or how to offer them. But in those inarticulate groans which rise from the depths of our being, we recognize the voice of none other than the Holy Spirit. He makes intercession, and his intercession is sure to be answered. For God, who searches the inmost recesses of the heart can interpret his own Spirit's meaning. He knows that his own will regulates its petitions and that they are offered for men dedicated to his service" (William Sanday).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Romans 8.1-7

Among the ruins of Oxyrhynchus, an ancient Greek city one hundred and twenty miles south of Cairo, Egypt, many manuscripts have been found. Our illustration reproduces one of them, a copy of the first seven verses of the Epistle to the Romans. There are mistakes in spelling and the writing is crude, and scholars who have examined it think that it was a copy made by a school boy as one of his school exercises, probably in the time of Constantine, early in the fourth century, and therefore the oldest manuscript now in existence of any of Paul's writings.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

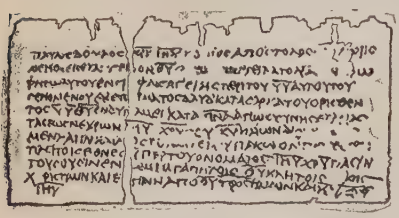
John 16.7-11

Our text from John's Gospel forms part of the last discourse of Jesus with his

disciples the night that he was betrayed. He sought to prepare them for what was coming, to comfort them and strengthen them. He told them that he was about to leave them, and sorrow filled their hearts. They were too saddened by the thought of separation from him, and depressed by the dark future disclosed to them, to ask any question about his departure. Jesus remarked upon their silence and added that strange as it might seem to them then, they should live to see that his going away was really a blessing, for in his stead he would send the Comforter.

Romans 8.12-27

The seventh chapter and the first eleven verses of the eighth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans dramatically picture the battle between the animal nature and the spiritual nature. Our text begins with the conclusion of the whole matter, that governed by the animal nature, man perishes, but governed by the Spirit of God, man lives eternally.



A Reduced Facsimile of the First Seven Verses of the Eighth Chapter of Romans

Spurgeon said of the eighth chapter of Romans that, like the Garden of Eden, it had in it all manner of delights. "If one were shut up to preach only from the eighth chapter he would have a text which might last a life time. Every line of the chapter serves for a text. It is an inexhaustible mine."

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. We are not hirelings, doing our work of necessity, without interest and without joy. We are glad sons and daughters of the Father, joint-heirs with Christ, working to extend his Kingdom. Shall we not go to our class in the spirit of Lewis McLouth, that noble teacher who, as his school building came into sight on his walk to school every day, repeated to himself Marcus Aurelius' words: "Lo, I am going with gladness to that work for which I was born into the world"?

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Beginning the Lesson

"I believe in the Holy Ghost" we say when we recite the Apostles' Creed. Do we always stop to think what we mean when we say it? Who is the Holy Spirit, and what is his purpose in the world? What is his relation to God? How can we receive his help in our living? These are questions which we may well spend time in pondering.

In his farewell address to his disciples what did Jesus say about the Holy Spirit? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

The Doctrine of the Trinity

A great scholar of Carthage by the name of Tertullian gets the credit for inventing the Trinitarian formula which has passed into the Church as its accepted or orthodox teaching: "One God, in three persons."

When we examine our thoughts and our experience, our God is "a great God and a great king above all gods." He is "the God and Father of us all." He is the creator and sustainer of the universe. He is the cause and ground of all being. We worship him. When we examine our thoughts and our experience (Christian experience) we think also of God in terms of love, forgiveness, redemption, friendship, etc., and we believe we find these fully manifested in Jesus, and this God we worship. Again when we examine our thoughts and our experience, the God we worship is not afar off in any sense, but is a present reality, a wholesome Inspirer and an adequate Comforter and Guide now. So we worship God, our minds roving in three directions—towards the infinite and the eternal, towards that infinite and eternal compressed into an Individual who manifested the infinite to finite minds, and towards him who "is my portion" now.

When we speak of "the work of the Holy Spirit," we mean how does the

eternal God operate in time among men? Or what does God do for mankind day by day? As a rule theologies speak of three ways in which God—as Holy Spirit—works among mankind. (1) His work in the world. That is, in those broad sweeping influences, which like some beneficent social movement affects masses of men and numbers of institutions; (2) his work in the Church, like, for instance, the eighteenth century revival; (3) his work in the individual, as when one is uplifted, comforted, guided and blest. Is he not at work in all three ways?—Professor Johnston, in The New Outlook.

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

It is the doctrine of the inter-working of the Spirit of God upon the souls of men. God knows what is the secret way in which mind reaches mind. I do not; you do not. I do not know why words on my tongue wake up thoughts corresponding to those words in you. I do not know how soul touches soul, how thought touches thought, or how feeling touches feeling; but I know it does. Now that which we see in the lower departments of life—that which exists between you and your friends and me and my friends—that I take, and by my imagination I lift it up into the divine Nature, and give it depth and scope and universality; and then I have some conception of the doctrine of God's Spirit poured upon the human soul.—Henry Ward Beecher.

The Holy Spirit is the Effectively Present Deity

He is the God of perennial and daily inspiration, the Comforter to whom we look in the most pressing needs of comfort which fill our common life. He is the God of continual contact with mankind. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a continual protest against every constantly recurring tendency to separate God from the current world. A God who made the world and then left it to run its course under the tyranny of force and law; a God who redeemed the world eighteen centuries ago and left it to be blessed by or to miss the blessing of redemption which he had provided—neither of these ideas of Deity can comprehend the truth of God the Holy Spirit. A present God, an everlasting God, an ever-pleading, ever-helping, ever-saving God—this is the God whom Christ told of and promised, the God who came in the miracle of Pentecost and is forever here.—Phillips Brooks.

How to Have the Holy Spirit in Your Life

How may you obtain the gift of the Spirit? By asking your heavenly Father. "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" promised Christ. If you believe in Christ, you must believe in this promise.

How may you know whether or not the Holy Spirit dwells in you and controls you? Paul answers in his letter to the Galatians: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." You need only place that cluster of the fruit of the Spirit beside the fruit borne by your life.

How may you have more and more of the Holy Spirit? Bishop Tomkins answers: "If a man recognizes the gift and opens to it his heart and life and obeys all the noble impulses of the Spirit, then the gift becomes richer and richer. And when he gives himself up wholly to God's ruling, then he is full of the Holy Spirit as was Stephen."

Be Filled with the Spirit

In the third chapter of Ephesians Paul speaks of the privilege of being filled with the Spirit. "I bow my knees unto the Father that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God."

And then later in the same Epistle Paul uses the present imperative and bids the Ephesians "be filled with the spirit." God does not give the gift of his Spirit to a few alone, he gives it to all, and it is not only our privilege but our duty to accept his gift.

A furnace may be full of coal, and a fire started, but if the smoke-stack is partly filled with soot or a brick has fallen down the chimney and partly obstructs the flue,

the fire will burn but poorly and little heat and much coal gas will be the result in the house. May not the difference between such a furnace and one whose flue is unobstructed serve as a homely illustration of the difference between a person who is not filled with the Spirit and one who is so filled? In both furnaces all is favorable to produce heat, only one does not draw well because of the presence of what does not belong there. In every child of God the Spirit is present, but in one there is something which prevents him from doing all that he can and would, while the other's soul is free for him "both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

"I firmly believe that the moment our hearts are emptied of pride, and selfishness, and ambition, and self-seeking, and everything contrary to God's law," said D. L. Moody, "the Holy Spirit will come and fill every corner of our hearts; but if we are full of pride, and conceit, and ambition, and self-seeking, and pleasure, and the world, there is no room for the Spirit of God; and I believe many a man is praying to God to fill him, when he is full already of something else. Before we pray that God would fill us, I believe we ought to pray him to empty us."

The Natural State for Every Christian is to Be Filled with the Spirit

I want to emphasize this, for men talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit as though it were a very peculiar and extraordinary experience to which few men attain, while the natural thing is this: to rise in the morning, to offer yourself to your Lord for the service of that day, and then believe that by his spirit he will empower you for all the duties of that day—and that is all there is to it. The duty of the day may be to preach to ten thousand people or to dress and care for the little child. The natural thing is to yield yourself to Christ, and therefore the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you will give you all the power you need for your special and specific work.

I really believe that the men truly filled with the Spirit are the men least conscious of that fact. When everything is normal physically you are not conscious of the physical organs, and when the respiration and circulation and the nervous functions are all natural you are not conscious of them. When everything is normal spiritually, you walk together with your Lord, you get into sweet fellowship with him, he is guiding you all the time by his Spirit while you are probably not conscious of the Spirit.—Charles R. Erdman, in Princeton Review.

Let Us Obey the Holy Spirit

In a book by P. Taylor Forsyth, entitled Positive Preaching and Modern Mind, there is a statement worthy of consideration. He distinguishes between what he calls worship and obedience. He claims that oftentimes "Christolatry" has been substituted for "Christocracy." Christ is worshiped, but not obeyed: while Christ demands obedience, and does not demand worship.

This statement suggests the thought that the Holy Spirit is not so desirous of our worship as he is of our obedience. Suppose it is true that we do not always bow down before him and in a distinct way adore him. Still, if we listen every day for a voice in the soul that interprets life in terms of Christ, and if we obey that voice,—the voice that summons us to be reproductions of Christ wherever we are,—we shall certainly obey the Holy Spirit, and shall find him the transforming and glorifying power of our practical life.—J. G. K. McClure.

Help me to be holy,
O Spirit divine.
Come, sanctify wholly
This temple of thine.
Now cast out each idol,
Here set up thy throne:
Reign, reign without rival,
Supreme and alone.—A. J. Gordon.

For Bible Class Discussion

The Person and work of the Holy Spirit. See Chapter I of The Transfigured Church, by J. H. Jowett.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What measures did Ezra take to have the people of Jerusalem instructed in the Scriptures? 2. What high commendation did the people of Borœa receive and why? (Acts 17.10-12.) 3. How far apart in time were the writers of the Psalms and of

Second Timothy? 4. What do you think of the title of a book upon the Bible—"The Book Nobody Knows"? 5. What is the Bible for? 6. Do you read the Bible daily? 7. What help are you getting from the Bible?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT HELPS US

Beginning the Lesson

The father of a little American lad had been in India for several years, and every morning and every night the boy had looked long and earnestly at his father's portrait as it hung on the wall. One day he said to his mother, "Mother, how I wish father would come out of the frame!"

Dr. Horton tells this incident and draws from it this beautiful thought: "If you may take Jesus Christ to be the portrait of the Father, the Holy Spirit is the way in which that portrait comes out of the frame, out of the frame of the Gospel story, a living, working reality, into the life, into the soul of the person who receives the Holy Spirit."

D. L. Moody used to say that the Holy Spirit is God at work. In our text from John's Gospel we have Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit, and in our text from Romans we see the Holy Spirit at work. When did Jesus speak the words recorded in our text from John? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

The Influence of the Holy Spirit

The sun itself is too bright for us to look at, but we like to feel the warmth of its beams. Even if we had our eyes shut we should know that the sun was shining, because we should feel its warmth. The sun is far away, millions of miles from the earth, but we feel its influence. Something comes from the sun to us which makes us warm; something comes from the sun to seeds and plants which draws them out of the earth and makes them bud and blossom. It is the influence of the sun.

If there were a sweet rose in a vase beside you, you would know that it was there, even if you shut your eyes. It is the influence of the rose.

There are many rivers which turn wheels, work mills, give the power for electric light, cleanse and refresh everything they touch. We do not see all the river at once, only a little bit of it. But we know that there is more of it than we can see, because of the work which it does. We know that the power to do all this work must come from somewhere, and just as the sunshine is a part of the sun itself, and as the fragrance is a part of the rose, so the flowing river which we see is a part of the great river which we do not see.

So the Holy Spirit is the influence of God. He comes from God and yet is one with God himself, as the sunshine is one with the sun, and the fragrance is one with the flower, and the flowing river is one with the great river.

When we see a boy or a girl with a heart full of love and generosity and unselfishness—so full that it flows over with kind words and deeds—when we see that strong, gentle influence leading him or her to do right, we know that God's Holy Spirit—God's holy influence—is in the heart of that boy or girl. Though we cannot see or touch him, we can feel and recognize the Spirit's love and sweetness and power. And when we feel a desire to do the right, a wish to do a kind act, or to say a kind word, we may know that it is God's Holy Spirit in our heart which is prompting this. That is his work—the mission of the Holy Spirit—to send joy and love and goodness into every heart, and make it like the Heart of God.—Condensed from an article by Grace Winter, in The Sunday School Chronicle.

The Beautiful Spirit

Uncle. On an island where the people are Christians of a sort, though they have some curious beliefs, they told me a strange tale about the ghost of Jesus Christ. According to them, the Lord could not be happy in heaven, because he was so sorry for the poor and sorrowful and sinful on the earth, so he left his glorious body in some secret chamber, and came as a disembodied spirit to continue his work of healing, and comforting, and saving his human brothers and sisters.

But he could no longer put his fingers on blind eyes, or touch a leper, or speak a word that men could hear. So he was obliged to try to use the hands and tongues of mortals to do his merciful deeds and speak his wonderful words.

Tom. How could he do that? Oh, I think I understand. Something like wireless telegraphy or brain waves.

Uncle. I can't tell you how they believed it was done, but whenever a man spoke wisely and helpfully to others, or did some brave, kind action, they said, "The Beautiful Ghost has visited him," or "The Beautiful Ghost has put it into his heart."

Edith. But it isn't true—is it, uncle?

Uncle. Something very like it is true, if I rightly understand what Jesus meant when he said: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." When we talk of the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of Christ, don't we mean very much the same as my friends who spoke of the Beautiful Ghost of Jesus? If we remembered that every right thought and good feeling came into our minds from him, we should have more courage to put them into practice, and if we remembered also that the Spirit of Christ must work through human hands and voices, I think we should not greatly need to puzzle our brains as to the meaning of the Beautiful Ghost.—J. A. Hamilton, in The Wonderful River.

The Revealing Spirit

"Little Boy Blue," as they tenderly called him because of his blue eyes, was quite blind. He was eight years old, and they had decided that his mother should tell him—what they had never let him know—what his blindness meant. As far as he knew, everybody was like him. He went his way fearlessly, he ran errands into the town and about the house, and did it by a kind of instinct, and as it was in a little country village he was quite safe in his little world.

Today he was to learn the truth, and after breakfast his mother told him. "How can I be blind?" the little lad said, "I can see beautifully."

"Come to the window, Little Boy Blue," said the mother. "Now, what do you see?"

"I can see you," he said, passing his hand over her arm and face, "and"—putting out his hands and feeling along the window-glass—"I can see the window quite plainly."

"Yes," said his mother, "but I can see a great sky overhead. I can see a green garden full of beautiful flowers, and far away I can see the sea rolling in on the beach, and a little ship dancing up and down on the waves."

"But how can you?" he said. "We're not on the seashore, and not in the garden. We're in the dining room, and I can only see you and the window. You're funning, Mumsie."

"No," she answered. "I'm telling you really true things. My eyes are different from yours, darling, and can see ever so much more. You can only see the window with your hands, but I can see through it with my eyes."

"Through it," Little Boy Blue murmured. "What's 'through it' mean? I know what 'over it' means, and 'on it,' and 'under it,' and 'round it,' and 'near it,' but 'through it' I don't understand. What is it, Mumsie?"

Then his mother told him how the glass was so strong it kept out the wind and rain, and yet they could look through it and see wonderful things outside. And Little Boy Blue listened and tried to understand. At last he said, putting his little hand into his mother's: "Why, Mumsie, you and I must live in a different kind of world. It's very nice in my world, but it must be nicer in your world. So," sighing, "you must lend me your eyes, Mumsie, and tell me always what you see, and I'll try and make it out. Come into the garden, Mumsie, and let's begin now." They went and began, and they have been at it ever since.

And as Little Boy Blue's mother was "his revealing spirit," so the Spirit whom God will send, if we ask him, will be ours.

"Thou who hast given me eyes to see
And love this sight so fair,
Give me a heart to find out thee
And read thee everywhere."
—Adapted from Lesson Light in Story Form, by Charles Herbert.

Sentence Sermons

God is for us—that is good; God is with us—that is better; God is in us—that is best.—Henry M. Booth.

If we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) in any measure, or if we have a keen desire for them, then the Holy Spirit must be within us.—Floyd W. Tomkins.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

GOLDEN TEXT: Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psalm 119.18

LESSON Deuteronomy 6.4-9; Joshua 1.8, 9; 2 Kings 22.8-20; Nehemiah 8.1-8; Psalm 19.7-14; Luke 24.25-32; Acts 17.10-12; 2 Timothy 3.14-17.
DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 119.105-112

PSALM 19.7 The law of Jehovah is perfect,
restoring the soul:
The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making
wise the simple.
8 The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing
the heart:
The commandment of Jehovah is pure, en-
lightening the eyes.
9 The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring for
ever:
The ordinances of Jehovah are true, *and*
righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired are they than gold,
yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the droppings
of the honeycomb.
11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned:
In keeping them there is great reward.
12 Who can discern *his* errors?
Clear thou me from hidden *faults.*
13 Keep back thy servant also from presump-
tuous *sins;*
Let them not have dominion over me:
Then shall I be upright,
And I shall be clear from great transgression.
14 Let the words of my mouth and the medi-
tation of my heart
Be acceptable in thy sight,
O Jehovah, my rock, and my redeemer.

2 TIMOTHY 3.14 But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 15 and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 Every scripture inspired of God *is* also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: 17 that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE VALUE OF THE SCRIPTURES, Psalm 19.7-11. The law of Jehovah, the testimony of Jehovah, the precepts of Jehovah, the commandment of Jehovah, the ordinances of Jehovah—all of these expressions are terms for the Scriptures of the Old Testament, especially for the Sacred Law which they contain. "The Christian Church has legitimately extended the words to the larger body of Scripture which forms the Bible." This, the Psalmist declares, is perfect, restoring the soul; sure, making wise the simple; right, rejoicing the heart; pure, enlightening the eyes—"imparting refreshment and vigor to the soul, giving new life and hope: dying eyes are glazed, a sick man's eyes are heavy and dull, health brightens them"; true, and righteous altogether.

The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring for ever. "When among the five terms, each clearly significant of the Scriptures, the Psalmist introduces the abstract expression 'the fear of the Lord,' he must mean the awe, the obedience, the discipline and inspiration of the Book whose praise is the burden of his song" (George Adam Smith).

More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold.

"The Word is like a deep, deep mine,
And jewels rich and rare
Are hidden in its mighty depths
For every searcher there."

Then with heart aglow, the Psalmist cries, "More to be desired are they than honey, and the droppings of the honeycomb"—the purest of the honey. "Moreover by them is thy servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

"If only we would obey the leadings of Christ, as the planets of the sun, our lives would be full of light and health and liberty. We should be restored to perfect health; our simplicity would be made wise, our hearts would be gladdened; our eyes would be enlightened; our poverty enriched, and our dispositions sweetened" (F. B. Meyer).

II. STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES LEADS TO A YEARNING AFTER A RIGHTEOUS LIFE, Psalm 19.11-14. Meditation upon "the perfect law," reflection

upon its warning, leads the Psalmist to a realization of how far he has been from following the law. He is appalled by the sins of which he knows he is guilty, and fearful of those of which he is ignorant. "Who can discern his errors? Cleanse thou me from hidden faults," he prays. "The Jewish ritual law drew a broad distinction between inadvertent—whether voluntary or ignorant—and deliberate sins, and the words translated 'errors' and 'hidden faults' are closely connected with that which in the Levitical system designates the former class of transgressions. They are not sins hidden from men, whether because they have been done quietly in a corner and remain undetected, or because they have only been in thought, never passing into act. Beyond the range of conscience and consciousness, there are evils in us all."

"There is a great part of every one's life which is mechanical, instinctive, and all but involuntary. Habits and emotions and passing impulses very seldom come into men's consciousness, and an enormously larger proportion of everybody's life is done with the minimum of attention, and is as little remembered as it is observed. But I can imagine a man saying, 'Well, if I do not know that I am doing wrong, how can it be a sin?' In answer to that, I would say that ignorance diminishes criminality, but ignorance does not alter the nature of the deed. Take a simple illustration. Here is a man who, all unconsciously to himself, is allowing worldly prosperity to sap his Christian character. He does not know that the great current of his life has been turned aside, as it were, by that sluice, and is taken to drive the wheels of his mill, and that there is only a miserable little trickle coming down the riverbed. Is he any less guilty because he does not know? Is he not the more so, because he might and would have known if he had thought and felt right? The old Greeks used to preach 'Know thyself.' A man's best means of knowing what he is, is to take stock of what he does. And let him get near to Christ that he may learn his duty from him, and he will find out many of the secret sins" (Alexander Maclaren).

"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me," the Psalmist further prays. What are "presumptuous sins"? Evidently they are the opposite of "hidden faults," sins of which the doer is fully conscious. "The word translated 'presumptuous' literally means 'that which boils or bubbles'; and it sets very picturesquely before us the movement of hot desires—the agitation of excited impulses or inclinations which hurry men into sin in spite of their consciences." Keep back thy servant from dominating sins.

"First secret sin, unsuspected, because the conscience is torpid; then open sin, known to be such, but done nevertheless; then dominant sin, with an enfeebled will and power of resistance. First, some unsuspected evil habit gnaws away the substance of the life, as white ants do wood, leaving the shell apparently intact; then come sins, open and palpable, and these enslave the will, becoming habits; and then follows entire abandonment of the profession of religion.

"'Hold thou me up,' 'keep thou me back,' means 'Give me in my heart a mightier strength than mine own, which shall curb all this evil nature of mine, and bring it into conformity with thy holy will.' Let us cultivate that spirit of lowly dependence, of self-conscious weakness, of triumphal confidence, which will issue in the perpetual prayer for God's restraint" (Alexander Maclaren).

"Then shall I be upright, and I shall be clear from the great transgression." Divine cleansing, verse 12, and divine restraint, verse 13, will deliver from sin and result in righteousness.

"The best argument for the Bible is the character which it invariably creates" (F. B. Meyer).

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah, my rock and my redeemer."

"We may guard the traffic of the soul as the switchmen in the towers direct the traffic of great railways, shunting attention, barring this mental traffic, permitting that, and so finding a free and unbroken way for thought to pass from little, unworthy things to vaster truth. We cannot disclaim

responsibility for this inner world in which, more distinctly than anywhere else, we really live. The apostle Paul has put in one unforgetable sentence the key to all enriched employment of our meditation. 'Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.' If we do this, the content of our meditation will be acceptable to God" (Gaius Glenn Atkins).

III. THE MISSION OF THE SCRIPTURES, 2 Timothy 3.14-17. Timothy was Paul's disciple and friend, and at the time Paul wrote this letter to him was in a position of authority at Ephesus, as is believed. He was the son of a Christian Jewess named Eunice, and Paul, in bidding him abide in the things which he had learned and had been assured of, reminds him of whom he had learned them. He had learned them from Paul himself, 3.10 and 2.2, from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, 1.5, having known the sacred writings from the time of his infancy. It was the Jewish parent's duty to teach the child the Law when in his fifth year. "The characters of Timothy's revered parent and teachers—of Eunice, Lois, the prophets, and Paul, to enumerate them in the order in which they had touched his life—had been molded in a certain school of morals. Their characters had admittedly stood the test of life. What more cogent argument could Timothy have for the truth and reasonableness of their teaching?" (Expositor's Greek Testament). "They (the sacred writings) are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," Paul adds. " 'Through faith which is in Christ Jesus' means 'If combined with faith in Christ Jesus' " (International Critical Commentary).

"The strength, safety and serviceableness of Timothy was, in the estimation of Paul, largely the consequence of early familiarity with the sacred writings.

"Careful experiments have shown that the deviation of the compass on board iron ships, which is very perceptible, is due to the position occupied by the vessel while it was lying on the building slip, where it acquired a definite magnetic character.

"Is not the human character profoundly affected whilst on the building slip? Is there not then imparted to the soul a bias which strangely persists through the years? Do we not then acquire a definite moral character? Let us watch carefully the culture of the child, building ever with an eye to the cardinal points, so shall the delicate needle of choice and sympathy suffer no deviation, but point infallibly to the true lode-star" (W. L. Watkinson).

The reference to Timothy's knowledge of the sacred writings leads Paul to an observation about their value. Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. The best evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures is found in the Scriptures themselves; as J. Hudson Taylor long ago said, "When studied, loved, obeyed, and trusted, the Bible never disappoints, never misleads, never fails."

"The apostle is here speaking of the Old Testament, but his words are equally applicable to the New—to the whole Bible. Inspiration consists in the divine quality that inheres in the Scriptures. As we know salt or sugar by their taste, so we know that Scripture is inspired by the special flavor or virtue, the spell or power, that it exerts upon our hearts and lives" (F. B. Meyer).

Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. "The word *reproof* comes after *teaching* because it has to do with the character which teaching makes. It proves and reproves. It is the plumb-line that we drop by the wall to see if it is straight. It is the yardstick by which we measure every creed. The word *correction* means *restoration,* and gives a thought in advance of *teaching* and *reproof.* It has in it the thought of making right what we have found to be wrong. The plumb-line may show that the wall leans, but it cannot straighten it. The yardstick may reveal that the cloth is too short, but it cannot lengthen it. The Bible, however, not only shows us wherein we are wrong, but it can right us. When Canova saw the piece of marble which, at great expense, had been secured for a celebrated statue, his

practiced eye discovered a little piece of black running through it, and he rejected it. He could discern black, but he could not make black white. The Bible discovers the black and makes it white" (A. C. Dixon).

"That the man of God—the minister of the Gospel, such as Timothy was—may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." "There is nothing you are going to need along the everchanging way of life which is overlooked in the counsels of the sacred writings. You need go nowhere else for directions" (J. H. Jowett).

"The more we look upon man, the more we feel that he is too good not to be better."

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Psalm 19.7-14

Psalm nineteen is a hymn of praise in two parts: the first part is devoted to the Works of God; the second, to the Word of God. The glory which the heavens declare is the glory of God; the perfection which the moral law displays is the perfection of the law of God. Here was the inspiration for Kant's famous saying, "Two things are awe-inspiring, the starry heaven above and the moral law within."

2 Timothy 3.14-17

The Second Epistle to Timothy was written from Rome. It is Paul's last instruction to his favorite disciple, and through him to all Christ's followers.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Our pupils may have been familiar with the Bible in a general way for a long time, but they may read it haphazardly or perfunctorily, if at all. Let us arouse in them today a new interest in the Bible, a new desire to know the Bible, a new determination to study the Bible. If we as teachers know our Bible and value it aright, we shall not fail to communicate to our pupils a desire to know and value it, too.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS
WHAT THE BIBLE IS FOR

Beginning the Lesson

Bishop Earl Cranston tells us what the Bible is for in these words:

The Bible thrusts the Being and Providence of God into human thinking.

It reveals the Fatherhood of God through Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, the Elder Brother of God's household.

It offers the Grace of God in pardon and adoption to every man who will set his face toward him.

It proclaims the Law of God for the individual, the family, and the nation.

It pours the Love of God into the wounds and sorrows of all earth's suffering millions.

It turns the Wisdom of God upon all the hard problems of human life.

It offers the Life of God for the cure of all the maladies that work in sinful flesh.

It sheds the Light of God upon the life that now is and the life that is to come.

What do our texts say upon the subject?

What the Bible Will Do for Us

If we are ignorant, they (the Scriptures) will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us. *Tolle, lege; tolle, lege;* Take up and read, take up and read.—Preface to the Authorized Version.

The Bible Brings Us into Tune with God

All stringed instruments quickly get out of tune. The action of the atmosphere, and the constant vibration in playing, relax the strings so that they need to be retuned very often. No matter how good the violin is, it needs to be tuned every day, and often many times a day.

Man is like a violin. He soon gets out of tune with God. The wear and tear of life, and the demoralizing atmosphere which sin creates, so affect his disposition that he needs to be brought into harmony with God every morning. Nothing will bring the believer into touch with God so soon as a little taste of the Divine Word.

Some people feel that they cannot spare the time for the morning watch, but I question whether any child of God can afford to do without it. Our souls need to be fed daily as well as our bodies, and the Bible is the soul's proper food. "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—Howard W. Pope, in The Christian Endeavor World.

A Few Testimonies in Regard to What the Bible Is For

In its pages you will find good counsel in the hour of perplexity and temptation, strong encouragement in the hour of peril, brave patience in the hour of hardship, and heavenly comfort in the hour of pain and sorrow.—Henry van Dyke.

The Bible awakens in us the noblest aspirations and teaches the purest sense of duty to God and man.—G. W. Goethals.

It is impossible to rightly govern the world without the Bible.—George Washington.

If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible our country will go on prospering and to prosper.—Daniel Webster.

Love thou the Scriptures, and wisdom will love thee.—St. Jerome.

In the Word of God I find not merely strength and comfort, but intense intellectual satisfaction.—Captain Mahan.

I have read the Bible morning, noon, and night, and have ever since been a happier and better man for such reading.—Edmund Burke.

Almost every man who by his life-work has added to the sum of human achievement based his life-work largely upon the teachings of the Bible.—Theodore Roosevelt.

God's Book speaks to every want of the human soul.—Arthur Hallam.

The Bible is the secret of England's greatness.—Queen Victoria.

The studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands.—Thomas Jefferson.

The Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God; in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us in him his will for our salvation.—Robertson Smith.

How to Make the Bible our Own

Many years ago, at one of the Northfield conferences, there was a man who carried about with him a very wonderful atmosphere. He seemed always to be on the heights with the light of God upon his face. An atmosphere like that does not "happen"; it is not the result of "temperament"; there is a reason for it, and Mr. Moody determined if possible to find that reason. So he asked the man about his work.

He found that he was a street-car conductor whose day began so early that he had to get up at four o'clock. But he arose still earlier than that. At half-past three, even on the bleakest winter mornings, he was up, taking his orders for the day from the Word of God. Mr. Moody had discovered the secret.

Will half an hour a day with the Bible always give such power? No. There are several things to be observed about this man's study. In the first place, it was study and prayer—not a mere skimming over a number of pages until the time was up; it was a vital communion between him and his Master. And every moment face to face with God will unfailingly count in a life. Yet there is still more to be considered. He put God first in his day—first in time, first in thought, first in order of importance. There is an especial promise to those who do that. And finally it cost him something—it was a daily sacrifice that he offered. It was not an easy half hour when he had nothing especial to do—it was one that demanded resolution and constant sacrifice of his own ease. "Shall I give the Lord of that which cost me nothing?" David cries.

It is an age of doubt; the old faiths are taking new forms, and many a young man or woman is honestly puzzled to know what to believe. How many of those who are troubled have really studied the Word of God? As an actual fact, most of the doubters go everywhere except to the Bible itself. They say they cannot accept Christianity until they understand certain doctrines. It is as if a pupil should refuse to study chemistry because his senses could not detect an atom; or refuse to love a friend until the existence of love had been proved mathematically.

Christianity is a laboratory course—not a lecture course. But it can be studied only with the one best Book and the one Teacher. He who waits to understand first never will know its power. He who, trusting, obeys, will find it proves itself to his soul.—The Youth's Companion.

Are You Giving the Bible a Chance?

You know that, whereas forty or fifty pounds would be all you would care to carry on this planet, you could easily carry six times that weight on the moon; but if you were on the sun and should lie down, you would not be able to get up again —all because of the difference in gravity.

Did you ever stop to ask yourself why the Bible does not interest you more? Are you giving it a chance? Or are you deliberately putting yourself into a place where the pull of earthly things—good times, success, luxuries—is so strong that your spirit cannot stand erect among them?—The Youth's Companion.

What Makes the Bible a Power

Some men have held that the Bible is a power, with a completeness which has seemed almost to lodge the power in the very print and paper of the Book itself. If you were to read it even mechanically, it would save you. If you opened it even at random, it would guide you. It is the Bible believed in and obeyed—that is, the Bible plus belief and obedience—that is power.—Phillips Brooks.

A Parable

Two men went into a church. The first said aloud: "I believe that the Bible is the Word of God. I accept it from lid to lid. I believe it was dictated by the Holy Ghost. I accept it as the infallible word of the Almighty." And then to himself he said: "But I do not read it; I am too busy. I do not read books which throw light upon it or unfold the meaning of its authors. I am absorbed in other matters." The other man communed with his heart thus: "I hardly know what to think about the Bible. I have not fully made up my mind yet. There are some things in it which I do not understand. But I read the Book. I expect to keep on reading it as long as I live." I tell you, that man goes down to his house justified rather than the other. One of the most dangerous heretics in the modern church is the man who says pious things about the Bible, but does not read it. What we need is not men and women who repeat eulogies on the Bible, but who read it, and keep on reading it, until the substance of it passes into their blood and bones.—Charles E. Jefferson.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The Sunday-school is the world's greatest institution for popularizing the world's greatest Book.—Gladstone.

2. The Pocket Testament League.

3. Is a British writer correct when he says: "The Bible is probably less widely read and less directly influential in our life and literature than it has been at any time since the Reformation"? What suggestions can you offer to make the Bible more influential in the lives of people today?

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is the great theme of Peter's sermon? 2. What three kinds of proof did he give? 3. What is the argument from the quotation from David? 4. In what ways does his sermon show great skill? 5. What is the kernel of the parable of the Prodigal Son? 6. Is your sympathy with the prodigal, or with the father? 7. How should the prodigal of today be treated? 8. Define repentance. 9. Illustrate repentance.

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

WHY READ THE BIBLE?

Beginning the Lesson

One beautiful October day we were going by motor from New York to Boston, intending to go around the outskirts of Hartford to avoid the traffic. Suddenly we found ourselves in the midst of the city; we had missed the route. What should we do? Get out the guide-book, of course, and look up the route. This we did, then changed our course, found the right highway, and were once more pushing on. If we would reach Boston before dark we knew that we must lose no more time in getting off the track, so we followed our guide-book closely from that time on.

On the journey through life we need a guide-book. Here it is, for as the Psalmist says,

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
And light unto my path."

This Guide-Book tells us what course to avoid, and what to pursue. What does the Psalmist say about it in our text? Here is what he says as Gerrit Verkuyl gives his words: "The teachings of the Lord are perfect; they bring us back to him. The Word of God is sure; it gives us wisdom to live by, no matter how little we know. The rules of God make us right; they make us glad. The commands of God are pure; they show us what is good. Reverence before God keeps our heart clean, and it lasts. His punishments are fair and altogether righteous. The teachings of God are worth more than money; they are pleasanter than the sweets we like so well. They help me to keep out of mischief, and they make me happy when I follow them."

Why Read the Bible? Because It Is a Record of Man's Search for God and of God's Revelation of Himself to Man

If we wish to know something about organic substances, gases and compounds, we study a book on chemistry. If we wish to learn how to grow dahlias, we consult a book on gardening. If we wish information about an incident in the history of Greece, we take up a book on Greek history. And in each case we go to the best book we know of on the subject in hand. In like manner, if we wish to learn something of God and our relation to him, we turn to the Bible, the book whose main concern is the story of man's search for God.

Matthew Arnold says truly that we could as well imagine a man with a sense of sculpture not cultivating it by the help of the remains of Greek art, and a man with a sense of poetry not cultivating it by the help of Homer and Shakespeare, as a man with a sense of conduct not cultivating it by the help of the Bible.

Because in It you Find the Standard of Conduct

The Bible is the moral standard of life. And morals are the throbbing heart-beat of life. There must be a standard, or all life goes askew. A yard-stick for cloth, a foot-rule for timber, a sixteen-ounce bit of metal for sugar, truthfulness in speech, honesty in trade, a recognized propriety in cultured circles, a Gray's Anatomy for physicians, a Blackstone for lawyers, and God's Book for strong, winsome life and rest of heart. The famous artist kept the bright colored stones always in sight to tone up his sense of color. The sailor keeps his eye constantly on compass and chart. That's the thing here. Reading it habitually tones up the moral sense, clears the vision, steadies the feet, poises the judgment, stiffens the will, gentles the spirit, comforts the heart, quiets the nerves, and sets the day's work to music.

But, in sharpest contrast with all other books, it makes you face a personal decision. There's no personal appeal in Napoleon or Cromwell. No decision presses in. But here the Man of the Book looks into your face. He calls you to choose. And you do, this way or that. A hand reaches out, and touches your conscience. There's a pull-up on your inner motives and your outer conduct.—Condensed from Quiet Talks about Simple Essentials, by S. D. Gordon.

Judging One's Life by the Standards of God's Law

To praise God's law for its perfect beauty and purity is one thing; but to judge our own lives by its lofty standards may prove quite another thing. It is comparatively easy to talk about being good and noble and kind and considerate to others in everything; but actually to live that way does not always go so easy. And yet, is not the living of these ideas really the most worth-while part of it?

During the days when Jesus lived upon earth there were large numbers of Jews who talked a good deal about religion and the law of God. They even wore excellent mottoes on their coats, so that everybody might notice how much they appreciated the noble words of ancient men; but when it came to living those fine suggestions, they did not care to do that. For that reason our Savior called such people "hypocrites." And I am sure you agree that they deserved the name.

This nineteenth Psalm devotes its last verse to an honest search into the heart. The final question is, "How am I living the will of my Creator, and treating my fellows? Am I honoring God by the way I live? Is he pleased with me?"

Every now and then let us take a square look at ourselves, and pray God to show us our faults. "Let the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be well pleasing in thy sight, O Lord, my help and my Savior."—Gerrit Verkuyl, in Scripture Memory Work.

He Who Is Unfamiliar with the Bible Is Lacking in General Intelligence

The Youth's Companion prints the following story:

Lillian felt a glow of pride and pleasure in her success at the guessing game in

which some of the older guests in the summer hotel had invited her to join. "We can't expect to match our wits with a girl just out of high school," said one of the party, with a kind smile at Lillian. "We might have known that she would recognize Boswell as the Englishman whose claim to fame rested upon a biography."

"And she knew that it was Pepys who chronicles small beer and great historical events in the same cryptic pages," added a gray-haired gentleman. "But if you will leave the room again, Miss Lillian, we'll try to find a character that won't be so easy for you."

When Lillian was recalled she was told that the person she was to guess was a leader, a lawmaker, and a wonder-worker, and celebrated for his meekness. After a few moment's thought she owned herself mystified. "He had stone tables," a lady suggested.

"Was it Hadrian?" Lillian asked. "He had lots of marble furniture."

"Ours is an Old Testament character," remarked the gray-haired gentleman, smiling, "and he passed forty days on a mount." Even this hint did not enlighten Lillian. "I'll have to give up," she said.

"Moses!" merrily chorused all the players.

"Moses!" repeated Lillian. "Why, did Moses preach the Sermon on the Mount?" The merriment died out of most of the elderly faces, and was replaced by a grave expression that made Lillian uncomfortable. "Have I said something wrong?" she whispered to Mrs. Dorsey.

"I think, dear, we are all pained to find you don't know who preached the Sermon on the Mount," was the gentle reply.

A few minutes later Lillian answered a tap at the door of her own room and Mrs. Dorsey entered. "I thought when I missed you that maybe you were here alone," she said, and then, noticing Lillian's tear-stained face, "Why, my child, you mustn't be unhappy."

"I can't help it. I know every one in the parlor was shocked at my ignorance about the Bible."

"Perhaps your ignorance is not altogether your fault. In my early days it was considered an important part of education, and I think the present almost total neglect of it in the home and school is a sad mistake. Aside from the great religious and ethical value of a knowledge of it, a familiarity with the Bible is necessary for good understanding of literature."

"Well, I intend to become acquainted with it," said Lillian. And she wrote home that night and asked for a Bible.

The Chancellor of the University of New York has declared that he wishes every freshman could be required to have a church school diploma certifying that he knows by heart the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, a church catechism of some kind, and a score of Psalms. Could you qualify?

Sentence Sermons

The Bible is the best gift God has given to man; all the good Savior gave to the world was given through this Book; but for it we could not know right from wrong; all things for man's welfare here and hereafter are to be found portrayed in it.—Lincoln.

Write the precepts of the Bible in your hearts and practice them in your lives.—Grant.

I will meditate on thy precepts,
And have respect unto thy ways.
I will delight myself in thy statutes:
I will not forget thy word.—The Psalmist.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Who uttered the words in the first paragraph of our text from Acts, to whom, and when? 2. Where is the quotation in verses 34 and 35 from? (Footnote of your Bible.) 3. What is the meaning of "They were pricked in their heart"? 4. Where is the parable of the Prodigal Son found? 5. What does the word *prodigal* mean? 6. What was the prodigal seeking when he left for the far country? 7. What did he find instead of happiness? 8. If a boy does not want his father to know where he has been in search of happiness, what does that fact indicate? 9. What does the parable teach about repentance? 10. About God's willingness to forgive? 11. Tell the story of a repentant man or woman recorded in the Bible.

LESSON VI—FEBRUARY 10

REPENTANCE AND FAITH

GOLDEN TEXT: Repent ye, and believe in the gospel. Mark 1.15

LESSON Isaiah 1.10-20; Ezekiel 18.20-23, 27-32; Mark 2.1-12; Luke 3.1-14; 15.11-24; Acts 2.32-39; Hebrews 11.1-10
DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 27.1-5

ACTS 2.32 This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33 Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear. 34 For David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself,

The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.

36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? 38 And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

LUKE 15.11 And he said, A certain man had two sons: 12 and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of *thy* substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. 13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. 14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. 15 And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. 17 But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: 19 I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. 21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son. 22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: 23 and bring the fatted calf, *and* kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: 24 for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

1. JESUS IS SOVEREIGN AND MESSIAH, Acts 2.14-36. Peter is speaking to Jews, and his first object is to prove that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies and expectations in regard to the Messiah, hence he tells them (verses 15-21) that the events of Pentecost which had so amazed them are but the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy (Joel 2.28-32), that at the coming of the Messiah God's Spirit would be poured forth, and old and young, men and women, bond and free, would see visions and speak divine truths.

Then Peter takes up his great theme that Jesus is the Christ, and gives three proofs. First, there are the miracles which his hearers had themselves witnessed. Second, there is the resurrection, of which they all are witnesses: God had raised Jesus from the dead to higher life and wider power. Third, there is the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which they have seen and heard: Jesus still lives and cares for his followers, for it is he who has sent the Spirit. Furthermore, the resurrection and exaltation fulfil a prophecy of David, as given in Psalm 110.1:

> The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand,
> Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.

Two different Hebrew words for *Lord* are used in the first line, and the meaning is, *Jehovah* said unto the *Messiah*. David could not have been speaking of himself, for David did not ascend into the heavens. "Sit thou on my right hand" means, Be partaker of the divine glory and dominion. "Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet" is an expression denoting complete victory, which originated, no doubt, from the ancient custom of conquerors putting their feet on their enemies' necks.

Then comes the climax of Peter's sermon: "Let all the household of Israel therefore

know assuredly that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified."

II. REPENT AND BELIEVE IN THE CHRIST, Acts, 2.37-39. Peter's words, especially his appeal to prophecy, were convincing to the Jews; and the home-thrust at their consciences—"whom ye crucified"—pricked their hearts, convinced them of their sin, and they cried, "Brethren, what shall we do?" How can we be freed from our guilt? "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." They must not only repent of their sins, but they must change their views in regard to Jesus; the One whom they had regarded as a false Christ they must accept as the true Christ; they would acknowledge this by being baptized.

Let us ponder Dr. Jowett's interpretation of Peter's words: First, there is repentance. And repentance is not a flow of emotion, but a certain direction of mind. I may repent with dry eyes. It is not a matter of feeling, but of willing. It is to lay hold of the aimless, drifting thought, and steer it toward God. It is a change of mind. Second, there is a definite and avowed choice of my new Goal, my new Lord and King. The Christian life cannot be a subterfuge. It cannot be lived incognito. There must be a confession, a bold and clarion-like avowal that henceforth I am a soldier of the Lord. And the spiritual experiences will be sure, as sure as the law-governed processes of the material world. There will be remission of sins. The old guilt will fall away from my soul as the chains fell from Peter's limbs when the angel touched them. And there will be the gift of the Holy Spirit. A new dynamic is mine! I enter into fellowship with the power of the ascended Lord!"

Often we give too narrow a meaning to the word "repentance." We think of it as meaning solely being sorry for sin. In Exodus 13.17 we read that when Pharaoh at last let the people leave Egypt, God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt. Here "repent' has another of its meanings, that of changing one's mind. True repentance always includes both sorrow for sin and change of mind and therefore course of conduct. The penitent seeks forgiveness for sin, and ceases to practice sin.

"For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him," Peter added. "To all that are afar off" may refer to the Gentiles, for it is an expression often used for Gentiles in both the Old and the New Testaments. If so, Peter at this time, of course, thought of the promise as being to the Gentiles only in case they became Jewish proselytes.

III. THE FORGIVING FATHER, Luke 15.11-24. At the demand of the self-willed younger son, in the parable, a father divided his living between him and his older brother. The prodigal, as we call him, therefore received one-third of the whole, two-thirds going to the older son, according to Deuteronomy 21.17. The prodigal had long been chafing under the restrictions of home, and he at once set out for "a far country"—a place where he could "live his own life."

The same feeling leads young folks astray still. The far country is often only a place where the young man or woman is out of sight of father or mother. One who is living a life that he would keep from his parents' knowledge is on the way to the far country of shame and wretchedness.

Our prodigal wasted his substance in riotous living, and when a famine came to the land he was reduced to such abject want that he, a Jew, hired himself out as a feeder of swine. A Jew could sink to no lower occupation. The swine were fed with husks, that is, the pods of the carob tree, and this was his food also.

"Adversity is a wonderful eye-opener: necessity is the mother of common-sense." The prodigal came to himself, and said within himself, like King Saul of old, "I have played the fool exceedingly"; he realized that the servants in his father's house had abundance, while he was perishing with hunger. He made a high resolve: "I will arise and go to my father and confess my sins and ask for a servant's place—for of that only am I worthy."

"Once, when the prodigal was fretting against the discipline of home and planning a way of escape, he called his conduct Independence; in the far country, when bright eyes were shining upon him and soft arms encircling him, he called it Pleasure; later, after he had run through his means, and

friends and loves had forsaken him, he called it Ill-luck; even when he commenced his reflections in the course of coming to himself, he only called it Folly; but now he has found the right name when he confesses, 'I have sinned'" (James Stalker).

The prodigal carried out his high resolve. He arose and came to his father, but while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

"Yet a great way off he saw me, ran to kiss me as I came;
As I *was* my Father loved me, loved me in my sin and shame" (Terstiegen).

"The prodigal had not yet yearned for his father's forgiveness, but merely for the bread in his father's house. His penitence was as selfish as his sin. Yet it availed. His father received him with an overflowing welcome, and never inquired what had brought him. It was enough that he had returned. And this is God's way. All the fitness he requires of us is to feel our need of him. He will receive us, and the experience of his grace will teach us true repentance. It was his father's welcome that humbled the prodigal. He never truly repented until he was in his father's arms, and then he repented in good earnest" (David Smith).

The prodigal began his confession, that he had sinned against him and God, and was no longer worthy of being called his son, but he did not say anything about being a hired servant, for his father would not let him finish. Well did the father know that the first important thing to do was to give his son's self-respect back to him, to clothe him as a son. Accordingly, he called his servants and bade them bring the best robe, put a ring on the lad's hand (the symbol of position and honor) and shoes on his feet (which no slave ever wore).

"Put them on me—robes of glory, spotless as the heavens above;
Not to meet my thought of fitness, but his wondrous thought of love" (Terstiegen).

There remained only to kill and eat the fatted calf and make merry; "For this my son was dead, and he is alive again; he was lost, and is found," exclaimed the happy father.

"There is a lesson here in the wisdom of doing things handsomely. If the time has come for closing a chapter of discord and estrangement, let it be done as completely, as emphatically and ungrudgingly as possible, without niggling, without reservations. If at the back of our minds we are always going to harbor the recollection of how badly the other fellow has behaved to us, we are neither wise nor Christian. Ring for the best robe of magnanimity and replace the rags of hatred and suspicion with that fair, stainless vesture" (J. Warshaw).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

David ascended not into the heavens, Acts 2.34. The Jews were wont to speak of a number of "heavens," or realms above the earth. According to Rabbi Abia, there were six ante-chambers, as it were, or steps, to the seventh heaven, where God himself dwelt. There are several references in the Scriptures to "the third heaven"; the first heaven was held to be the firmament; the second, the region of the stars; the third, the throne of God.

Branch and Pod of a Carob Tree

He sent him into the fields to feed swine, Lk. 15.15. Jews so abhored swine that they would not even speak of them by name, calling them instead "the other things." The polite Moslem today who mentions swine hastens to add, "begging pardon for the allusion."

The husks that the swine did eat, Lk. 15.16. The carob tree grows in arid, rocky soil where nothing else will thrive, and its "husks," or pods, are today a substitute for grain among the very poor on the edge of the Sahara as well as in Syria.

And fell on his neck, and kissed him, Lk. 15.20. The oriental robe is open

about the throat, and it is a common custom for friends to kiss each other on the neck.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Occasion for Peter's Sermon

Just before he was parted from them, after the resurrection, Jesus bade his disciples wait at Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit's coming "not many days hence." The purpose of the promised blessing was to fit them to be witnesses for him in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Ten days later occurred the events of Pentecost which earlier verses of Acts 2 record. The crowd which gathered probably assembled in the courtyard of the house in Jerusalem whose Upper Room was headquarters for the disciples, and in that courtyard Peter delivered his sermon.

The Occasion for the Parable of the Prodigal Son

The group of parables about the lost in the fifteenth chapter of Luke was spoken by Jesus in answer to a sneer. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them," scornfully said his enemies, the scribes and Pharisees. They themselves despised moral and social outcasts, and they could justify their ways only on the assumption that God despised them, too. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," was the teaching of Jesus. The three parables which Jesus gave to illustrate God's mercy and love toward sinners are called The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Lost Son. The lost sheep represents the stupid, bewildered sinner; the lost coin, the ignorant, unconscious sinner; the lost son, the deliberate, wilful sinner—the sinner against light and knowledge: none of them is beyond reach of God's love. In our parable of The Lost Son, the prodigal represents the sinners in their guilt, penitence and pardon, while the elder son represents the hard-hearted Pharisees who scorned them.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Dr. Stigler says of Peter's address: "In its adroitness, in the arrangement of the arguments, in its analysis, in its steering clear of Jewish prejudices, in its appeal and effect, it is without a peer among the products of uninspired men. As an expression of persuasive argument it has no rival. The more it is studied the more its beauty and power are disclosed."

Note that Peter began his talk by securing attention, and he secured it by recalling to his hearers' minds something which they themselves knew—the mighty works and wonders which God had wrought through Jesus in their midst.

Study Peter's talk and note his aim through it all, and how he steadily led up to it till he brought his truth home to his hearers with telling force that this Jesus whom they crucified is both Lord and Christ. So convincingly did he speak that he accomplished his purpose, for his hearers were pricked in their heart and said, "Brethren, what shall we do?" That was an aim worthy of all his efforts.

Do you ever come before your class without any aim for the lesson's teaching? Is your aim ever small in comparison with the exertions you put forth? Is your aim sometimes defective? Do you hit, as well as aim?

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS
THE WAY TO FORGIVENESS

Beginning the Lesson

Thomas of Spoleto heard Francis of Assisi preach in the Piazza at Bologna in 1220 and was lost in wonder at the power he had over many learned men. "For," said Thomas, "he had not the manners of a preacher: his ways were rather those of conversation. His apparel was poor, his person in no respect imposing. His face was not at all handsome." Thomas came upon the secret of the power of Francis as he added: "Yet God gave such great efficiency to his words that he brought back to peace and harmony many nobles whose savage fury had not stopped short of the spilling of blood." The power came from God. And it was the power of God that enabled Peter, an unlearned man, to bring peace into the hearts of fellow Jews whose savage fury had led to the taking of the life of Jesus. (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

The First Step in True Repentance

Cicero says that the words of Pericles left stings in the minds of his hearers. Luke

says that people at Pentecost were pricked in their heart when they heard Peter's words. In the seventeenth verse of the fifty-first Psalm, which is a Psalm that bears the title "A Contrite Sinner's Prayer for Pardon," we read: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Our word *contrite* comes from the Latin word meaning literally *crushed, bruised, ground to powder.* A mind that is stung, a heart that is pricked, or broken, or bruised, all these are figures of speech used to express the thought that some one is conscious of having done wrong. The first step in true repentance is the awakening of the conscience to the fact that one has sinned.

When the prodigal "came to himself," he came to his true self: when he had wandered away and lived an evil life in the far country he had wandered away from his true self. How did he come to himself? By thinking. "You can never get to God with an unexerted mind," declares Dr. McKensie. "And this man began to think by judging himself. All thinking is a process of judgment. When a man begins to think about himself and God he begins to judge himself."

Other Necessary Steps

Says an Old English Homily: "Repentance is a true turning unto God whereby men, forsaking utterly their idolatry and wickedness, do with a lively faith embrace love, and give themselves to all manner of good works, which by God's word they know to be acceptable unto him. Now there are four parts of repentance: contrition, confession, faith, amendment of life."

"We are always finding out, like the prodigal, the miserable bargains we have made," writes Professor Drummond. "But it is only when we come to our Father that we can get them undone and the real debt discharged." The parable of the Prodigal Son is a picture of God's unconditioned forgiveness of all who repent and call upon him.

Repentance Explained by the Parable of the Prodigal Son

What is repentance? Is it to be aware of the exceeding dreadfulness of sin? No; that is conviction of sin. Is it to be deeply and truly sorry for our sins? No, there is another name for that: that is contrition. Conviction and contrition are steps along the way of repentance, but neither of them is repentance. It is possible to be well aware of the sinfulness of sin, and to be exceedingly sorry that we have sinned, and yet not to be genuinely repentant for our sins, at all.

A man is lost in the dark, interminable African forest. He knows it. As he goes on, looking in vain this way and that, finding no path, he realizes his horrible condition. He is filled with dismay and despair. His heart is sick within him. Does that save him? He knows that he is out of the way, and he is as sorry for it as a man can be—does that set him in the right path, and save him?

To have our eyes open to the fact of sin is not enough; to have our eyes full of tears on account of sin is not enough; we have not yet repented. The parable of the Prodigal Son will help us to understand what repentance it. The young man "came to himself." The tragedy of his position was not in the fact that he had come to be a hired man on a farm, but that he was fitted by his birth and education and all the circumstances of his life to be something very different from that. The young man was sorry for himself to the bottom of his heart. That is the feeling of one who is suffering the punishment of sin. He despises himself—such a weak will, such a weak fool! But this is not yet repentance. Then said he: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants." That is repentance.

Repentance implies a realization of sin as something more than a deed to be ashamed of and sorry for; as something more than an act which is followed by consequences of misery, by famine, forsaking of friends, company of swine, everlasting company of devils. Repentance means a sense of sin as an offence against a father. "I have sinned against heaven," against the power of God; and I am being righteously punished for that; but that is not the whole of it—"in thy sight, my father," have I sinned, against love, human and divine. My sin has been a grief and pain "before thee." When a sinner recognizes that sin is itself more dreadful than everlasting punishment, then he is beginning to repent—to repent of sin.

Especially, repentance means a definite refusal to abide longer in sin. Sin is no longer companionable, no longer endurable. The word *repentance,* in the New Testament, means *a change of mind.* It means a refusal of the old and worse, a reaching

out of the hand to the new and better. It signifies the making of a good resolution, with a good will.—George Hodges, in The Path of Life.

What Repentance Cannot Do

May I have a word with the younger brother before he leaves home? You see no danger in having your fling like other young men, and so you are determined to have your wander-year of sin. If I were to tell you it would not be sweet and that it were better to be the meanest servant in your father's house than a prince in that foreign palace, you would not believe me. Will you allow me to at least remind you that for all that gay sowing you shall have to reap the sad harvest? Have you buoyed yourself up with hope that you can repent whenever you please and return home? Perhaps you may be able, and perhaps you may not. Your conscience may be seared by that time and your heart degraded; you may die among the swine. But take it at the best, that after years of foolishness are over, you are forgiven by God, who ever waiteth to be gracious, and by man, who may or may not be gracious. Grant that you return with all the happy circumstances of the prodigal—the feast and the robe and the ring and the rest of it—have you lost nothing which cannot be restored, and can you be placed where you were? The grace of God is wonderful, but there are things that the grace of God cannot do. It cannot give back to you the years which you wasted at the University, and which you bitterly regret when you are handicapped in some profession by want of knowledge. It cannot restore the health which you flung away, nor save your innocent children from the diseases which are the heritage of their father's ill doing. It cannot narcotize your memory, when it resurrects your dead sins and dangles them before your eyes. It cannot restore the best of all possessions—a good conscience for the past. "Give me my share," you are saying, "of the goods that belong to me," and God will give you your body and your soul, your young mnahood, with all its glory of strength and hope. If you waste it, you shall never have it again; there was no second portion for the younger son. If you have gone away, come home, I beseech you, where a welcome waits you. Save the years that remain, and live like a man in the future, if you are living like a beast now. Come home to God, for there is mercy with him, and he will abundantly pardon. But, if it still be of any use, my appeal is that you never go away, and never delude yourself with the foolish idea that the prodigal son who returns can ever be as well off as the elder son who remains. For the riot of the far country into which you go, and the mercy of the Father when you return, shall never make up for the portion which you have wasted and lost for ever.—John Watson, in Respectable Sins.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. A new life is the best and most sublime penitence.—Martin Luther.

2. Our job as fathers.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is prayer? 2. What is the purpose of prayer? 3. Is daily prayer an essential of Christian living? 4. Does God answer prayer? 5. What does prayer achieve? 6. What are some of the prevalent misconceptions about prayer? 7. What do we mean when we pray, "Thy will be done"? 8. How did Abraham pray for the people of Sodom? 9. What was Moses' prayer after the people made the golden calf? 10. Do you pray for others?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

TURNING FROM SIN TO GOD

Beginning the Lesson

The other day I saw on the first page of the daily paper the picture of a boy together with this statement: "Boy Scouts of the neighborhood are asked to be on the lookout for A—P—, who left school Friday afternoon and did not return home." The lad, it seems, had been reprimanded at school for some fault, and in fear or despair had run away. "Why didn't he go home to his father and mother who love him?" everyone wondered. He did return after a few days of wandering and hunger, and there is no better description of the joy of his father and mother and his own happiness and relief than is found in the fifteenth chapter of Luke. There we have Jesus' beautiful story of the lost boy and of his return to his father and realization of his father's love. Who will tell the parable? (Continue with Explanations and Comments upon Luke 15.)

The Prodigal's Repentance

There is nothing noble about the man's penitence. He doesn't think most about his father's hurt feelings or about his own youth so vilely and stupidly cast away, but about the well-filled platters of the hired servants in the old home! But this is to be said for him: he was once for all rid of self-excusings: "I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you' ", and he acted promptly, "I will be up and off to my father."

The Prodigal Son
From a Painting by Edward Debule

God can bring gold out of the crude ore of rudimentary penitence. If only a man owns up to the real facts about himself, however mingled his motives, God can work wonders with him; for real penitence, however imperfect, means that a man lays his soul once more into God's hands. God can heal our self-despisings. He is baffled by our self-excusings.—R. C. Gillie.

Were They Repentant?

A small girl was once shut in a room by herself and told to stay there till she could say she was sorry for what she had done. After a while the door was slowly opened, and the child stood on the threshold, but did not speak. "What do you want to say?" questioned her mother. "Nothing, only just that I'm sorry enough to have the door left open." Was she repentant?

A man stole a pair of shoes and was convicted. Some time afterwards he met the lawyer who had defended him at the trial. "Squire, the taking of those shoes was the worst job I ever did," he acknowledged. Did that sound like repentance? But he kept on talking. "Yes, I didn't keep 'em only a week, and then they put me in jail. I gave you the only horse I had to defend me; my crop was lost 'cause I couldn't see to it; and then, Squire, they gave me thirty-nine days at last. I tell you, Squire, it was a bad speculation." Was he repentant?

A small dog was once slapped and turned out of the room because he had

destroyed something. He ran away very much ashamed. Then he trotted briskly off to his master's room, seized something in his mouth, and brought it to the closed door. After a while his master opened the door and saw the dog, looking very wistful and wagging his tail, and beside him some thirty shoes and slippers. He had been taught to bring his master's slippers to him, and he thought that a big pile of them would atone for his misconduct. Was he not trying his best to turn from his evil way and do good? Was he repentant?

Recall the story of Reuben, who sold his brother Joseph. Was he repentant? Was Pilate, who washed his hands of responsibility, repentant? Felix, who trembled before Paul's preaching, was he repentant? Was Peter repentant after he denied his Lord?

True Repentance

Sometimes children have told me that repentance means "to be sorry for our sins." Well, of course, we ought to be sorry for our sin—very sorry—because it grieves our Father in Heaven; but that is not what the Bible means when it speaks about repentance. We may be sorry for our sin and yet not repent at all. I once saw a boy throwing mud at a gentleman in the street. When he was caught and threatened with the police, he began to cry bitterly and seemed very sorry—I dare say he was sorry at the time, because he thought he would get into trouble. But when he was released, he ran down the road laughing and began to do it again. That boy was sorry, but he did not repent. No, to repent is to "change the mind," and so to change it that we change our conduct as well. Suppose I go out of my front gate and turn down the road to the right. After walking a little way, I think I will go up the road instead; my thinking so looks like repentance; but the repentance is not real unless I stop going in one direction, turn round, and go in the other. That is real repentance, though I may not feel at all sorry about the matter.

As I said before, we ought to be very sorry for sin; but never mind that just now. Instead of trying to feel sorry, let us repent—that is, let us change our minds; and to show that we have really changed them let us change our ways. If we have been idle, or disobedient, or untruthful, or dishonest (even in little things), or selfish, or unkind, let us resolve that, from today, we will be so no longer. If we have been getting into bad company, we must make up our minds to keep away from them in the future. If our Bible-reading and our prayers have been neglected, let us see to it that we turn over a new leaf. All this will be far better than shedding tears over our misdoings, and then going on just as we did before. St. John the Baptist told the people that they were to "bring forth fruits worthy of repentance," that is, to do the things which would show that they had really altered their minds, because he knew that no repentance was of any use unless it made an alteration in their lives.

We must look to Jesus Christ for his help. God has "exalted him a Prince and a Savior to give repentance," and without that gift we shall continue to go on in our evil ways. We may wish to do better and think a great deal about it; we may half make up our minds that we will accomplish it, but we shall fail until we have help from him. So let us ask him to send his Holy Spirit into our hearts that we may be helped to do what is right in his sight.—Wilfred M. Hopkins.

Sentence Sermons

The true life can never be lived until the selfish prayer, "Give me," gives way to the better prayer, "Make me."—J. Wilbur Chapman.

"Repentance is toward God, and not toward punishment."

The way of the transgressor is hard at best, but the traveling becomes easier with the first turn to the right.—The Youth's Companion.

Repentance is regret made manifest in reformation.—William George Jordan.

Repentance is heart's sorrow
And a clean life ensuing.—Shakespeare.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is a hypocrite? 2. For what does "the inner chamber" stand? 3. What is the meaning of "vain repetitions"? 4. About whom are the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer? 5. The last three? 6. Since God knows our need before we ask him, why should we make known to him our wants? 7. What is wrong about the Pharisee's prayer? 8. What was Daniel's habit of prayer? (Dan. 6.10.) 9. How often do you pray? 10. Do you pray only for yourself?

PRAYER

GOLDEN TEXT: If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. John 15.7

LESSON Genesis 18.23-33; Exodus 32.21, 32; Nehemiah 1.4-11; Daniel 6.10; Matthew 6.5-15; Luke 18.1-14; John 17.1-26; I Thessalonians 5.17; I John 5.14, 15
DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 121.1-8

MATTHEW 6.5 And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee. 7 And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8 Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil *one*.

1 JOHN 5.14 And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: 15 and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.

LUKE 18.9 And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought: 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. 13 But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner. 14 I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. PRAYER SHOULD BE SINCERE, Mt. 6.5-8. And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. It was the appearance of righteousness that the hypocrites coveted, not the righteousness itself.

"To be seen of men is, after all, one of the most influential incentives to human conduct. Some people go into reckless extravagance in order to be seen of men as rich; and the average person would rather be seen to have certain qualities than actually to possess them" (H. S. Brewster).

"Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward," said Jesus in regard to the hypocrites. The Greek word translated "received" means "received in full," and is the one used in drawing up receipts. They have received the full reward which they sought, they have been seen of men, and this was what they desired, they have no claim whatsoever to any further reward.

"Nor will he to those lips attend
Whose prayers are not sincere" (John Buxton).

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret. The inner chamber with closed door stands for any place where we are alone with God. For Nathanael it was under the fig tree, for Peter it was on the housetop. Jesus himself chose the mountain-side and the garden for his communing with his Father. When you pray shut out the world and shut yourself in with God. "Dew falls, we are told, only when the atmosphere is still, and the dew of prayers will fall abundantly on our souls only when we are at leisure." Jesus is not disparaging public prayer (which he elsewhere commands), but he is emphasizing the test of sincerity which private prayer affords.

And thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

"Converse with God reaches its highest level when, alone with him, I pour out in his listening ear everything in my heart; and the manner in which I

have learned that secret and live in the power of it is the measure of joy and strength of a great friendship with God" (G. Campbell Morgan).

And in praying use no vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do. The emphasis is on the adjective *vain,* rather than on the noun *repetitions;* it is the rattling over of words without heed to their meaning which Jesus declares vain, futile, useless. Do not pray by idle rote, like pagans, is Moffatt's translation. For they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. It is not the much speaking, but the sincere speaking, which reaches the throne of God.

"When thou prayest, rather let thy heart be without words than thy words without heart," counsels Bunyan.

"My words go up, my thoughts remain below,
But words without thoughts never to heaven go" (Shakespeare).

Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. We do not pray for the sake of telling God our needs: we pray that we may open our hearts to him, may have a realizing sense of communion with him as his children, and may receive from him the inspiration and aspiration which he gives to those who pray aright.

II. FOR WHAT TO PRAY, Mt. 6.9-13. After this manner therefore pray ye. This does not mean that the prayer which Jesus now gives is the only prayer that we should offer. But it does counsel us to model our prayers after this one, to let them deal with both divine and human interests, with both spiritual and physical wants. It reminds us of many things which we are inclined to forget when we commune with God. Too many regard prayer as a petition for personal needs or desires, whereas Jesus gives us a prayer which is for others as well as for self, and is concerned chiefly with God's interests and our spiritual needs.

Before the thought of self must come the thought of God. The first three petitions have to do with the things of God—they refer to him, his kingdom, and his will. Our Father, thus the prayer begins, and it is "a very good name for God," as little Joe says in Bleak House. Who art in heaven. "This is more, shall I say, than God's postal address. This little phrase tells us what kind of Father we have. I do not think it at all fanciful to say with Dr. Stanford, that, as Heaven is the place of perfection, 'Our Father, who art in Heaven' may be interpreted to mean, 'Our Father, who is the one perfect Father.' 'Heaven' is spoken of in the Bible as the place of dominion and authority. 'The Lord hath prepared his home in the heavens,' says the Psalmist, 'and his kingdom ruleth over all.' Our Father is in the place of supreme dominion, love rules the universe" (J. D. Jones).

Hallowed be thy name. "Hallowed" means treated as holy, reverenced, rightly worshiped and the "name" of God stands for God himself, his revealed nature. In this petition we pray that we may honor the Father in thought and life.

"There is a false boldness, as Luther remarked, which talks to God as a man might talk to a 'Cobbler's lad.' And if even our smallest human spirit has its holy of holies that may not be inconsiderately violated, how much more must deep reverence characterize all our thought of God" (Henry Churchill King).

Thy Kingdom come. Let thy sovereignty be realized.

Let us not forget Ruskin's words: "If you do not wish his kingdom to come, do not pray for it; but if you do wish for it, you must do something more than pray for it—you must work for it."

"Lord, when we pray, 'thy kingdom come,'
Then fold our hands without a care
For souls whom thou hast died to save,
We do but mock thee with our prayer."

Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. May our wills conform to thy will.

"What an enormous sweep this prayer has! We are praying that God may rule our business life, our commercial life, and our political life. We are asking him to take the government of our markets and our offices and our exchanges. We are asking him to be the Lord in the realms of right and light" (J. D. Jones).

The last three petitions are for our needs, our sins, our temptations. The pronouns are *our, us, we;* never *my, me, I.* Prayer must not be selfish.

Give us this day our daily bread. We may bring to our Father all our wants, and not ours alone, but those of others. In this petition we ask that our brothers' needs be met, and it implies that we will help supply that need.

"I thank thee much for bread to live;
I thank thee more for bread to give."

And forgive us our debts. "Yes, *debts* is a good word, the right word in the right place. It helps to place us in our true relation to God. It suggests that all sins may be resolved into a failure to fulfil our due undertakings towards him. Forgive us our unfulfilled duties! Forgive us our unpaid bills in goodness! It is a better word than *trespasses;* for *trespasses* suggests only the definite act against the right with which conscience charges us. *Debts* suggests all our dropping below the true ideal. 'Forgive us in so far as we have not done all we should toward thee.' That is a comprehensive prayer for pardon" (Schlater).

As we also have forgiven our debtors. Is our grace the measure of God's? No; but until we have the spirit which forgives, we have not the spirit which can be forgiven. If it were possible for us to receive love from God and give out hate to men; if we could be joyous toward him and sullen toward our neighbors; if we could accept from him sunshine, tenderness and love while we radiate annoyance, hostility, and disdain toward our fellow men, then we might receive forgiveness and be unforgiving.

And bring us not into temptation. God does not lead us into temptation, but he permits us to be brought into temptation. *Temptation* has here its earlier meaning of a testing, trying, as has the root word still in our word *attempt.* The thought is that God has so ordered this world that we are brought into circumstances which try our characters, put us to the test. In this we ask to be spared testings that would be too hard, to be saved from trials which we cannot stand, by it we express our trust that when assailed by temptations God will give us strength to withstand them.

"If a man were God, then woe to his fellow-men. His very goodness would become their bane. He would establish a tyranny swallowing the individuality of men in order to keep them from sin. But how wonderful is our God! His attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience do not imperial a man's right to his fullest self. They safeguard and insure that right. God's restraint is as deep as his Being and his power" (Professor Nash).

But deliver us from the evil one. Deliver us from evil, the Authorized Version reads. The Greek words may be either masculine or neuter, and therefore may be translated *the evil one* (masculine) or *the evil* (neuter). Orientals think of evil as personified, hence the Revisers have preferred "the evil one," while we naturally think of evil in the abstract, and say, "the evil."

III. THE CONDITION OF ANSWERED PRAYER, 1 John 5.14, 15. That prayer is answered which is in accordance with God's will. The prayer thus offered we know is heard and receives its answer, and the petitioner knows that, whatever God's answer, it is the best answer for him. Thus John writes in his First Epistle.

"It is sometimes asserted that Christians think they can impose their will upon God. By their importunity they imagine they can induce the Almighty to exchange his plane for theirs. Instructed Christians think nothing of the sort. No prayer is truly Christian which does not breathe the spirit—'Not my will but thine be done.' We do not want to change God's will; we want to bring ourselves up to it. We do not desire to alter his plan; we desire to know what his plan is and to fall in with it" (C. E. Jefferson).

IV. TWO CONTRASTED PRAYERS, Luke 18.9-14. See The Historical Background. This parable, or imaginary incident, Jesus spoke to those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought." "They were bigots, self-opinionated, self-conceited, dogmatic, and contemptuous—they wore all the attributes of bigotry."

A Pharisee and a publican went up into the temple to pray at one of the regular hours of prayer. The temple was on Mount Moriah, and was higher than the rest of the city, therefore Jesus speaks of going *up* into the temple. The word *Pharisee*

means *separated:* the Pharisees were holier-than-thou men. The publicans were the tax-gatherers, and therefore greatly despised by other Jews.

"Two went to pray? or, rather say,
One went to brag, and the other to pray."

Standing in a conspicuous place, the Pharisee recalled his virtues to God's attention, he boasted rather than prayed; unlike others, even this publican, he was not an extortioner, nor was he unjust, nor an adulterer; he fasted twice in the week (the law required only one fast day in the year, on the Day of Atonement, Lev. 16.29, but many Jews fasted every Monday and Thursday); and he tithed all that he had (the law required only a tithing of farm products, of the fruits of the field and the cattle).

It was not the Pharisee's fasting and tithing that were wrong, but his self-complacency and his contempt of others. A modern Pharisee exclaimed in his public prayer, "O Lord, the more I sees of other people, the more I likes myself!"

Note that the Pharisee "prayed with himself," rather than to God, and recall the newspaper report that a certain prayer was "the most eloquent ever delivered to a Boston audience." He says, "I thank thee," but he is not conscious of having received anything from God, and is thinking only of what he himself has done. "He has brought a prospectus of his qualifications, and would have the divine endorsement" (Thomas Yates).

"Religion cannot be reduced to carefully calculated performance by which a man is entitled to declare his rating before God. Religion can never be rated by its practices, though its sincerity may be witnessed by deeds. Is there not a danger today lest in the zeal of organized religion we fall into calculating our benevolences, recording our religious observances, and neglecting the penitent cry of the heart which can bring us into the presence of God?" (Tertius van Dyke).

In contrast to this Pharisee, the publican stood in humble attitude afar off. "The Pharisee can see no use for the tax-gatherer in the temple, but to serve as a dark background for the dazzling whiteness of his own soul. The tax-gatherer accepts the judgment; he stands afar off, so that his presence will not pollute the Pharisee at his prayer" (J. E. McFadyen).

"One nearer to God's altar trod,
The other to the altar's God."

Smiting his breast, the publican cried, "God, be thou merciful to me a sinner." "This man," said Jesus, "went down to his house justified (accepted by God, Moffatt's translation), "rather than the other," the self-righteous Pharisee. "The Master sets the Pharisee and publican in contrast, and his judgment goes against the man who has made some progress in moral attainments, and favors the man who has no victories to show, but only a hunger for victory. The dissatisfied sinner is preferred to the self-righteous saint" (J. H. Jowett).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

They love to stand and pray, Mt. 6.5. Standing was the usual Jewish attitude in prayer, as kneeling is with us. In prayer a Jew usually stood, turned towards Jerusalem, covered his head, fixed his eyes downwards. The ancient Church prayed standing on Sundays and festivals, but kneeling on fast-days, and the Eastern Church still observes this rule.—One Volume Commentary.

In the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men, Mt. 6.5. During the synagogue services those who wished to be thought devout did not follow the public prayers, but said private, self-righteous prayers of their own, loud enough to be heard and to attract the attention of the congregation. In the streets the same people would sometimes stand for three hours at a time in the attitude of prayer. The prayers of the phylacteries (Mt. 23.5) were required to be said at a fixed time with great parade and ceremony. When the time came, the workman put down his tools, the rider descended from his ass, the teacher suspended his lecture, to say them. The ostentatious were careful to be overtaken by the prayer-hour in a public place, and to remain longer praying than anyone else.—One Volume Commentary.

In praying, use not vain repetitions, Mt. 6.7. The Buddhist who uses a prayer-

string twenty-five feet long on which a thousand beads are strung, offers a thousand prayers to Buddha daily. Beginning at one end of the string, he says, "O great, adorable Buddha," and slips a bead; then he repeats, "O great, adorable Buddha," and slips another bead; and so on till he reaches the other end of the string and his task is completed. Sometimes he contents himself with saying over merely the sacred syllable "Um!"

Praying Hands—Dürer

After this manner therefore pray ye, Mt. 6.9. Every Jew was required to recite daily eighteen sets of prayers of considerable length, or, if hindered by press of business, a summary of them; the rabbis also taught their pupils an additional form of prayer composed by themselves, to be added to these eighteen prayers. Our Lord's disciples would therefore understand that they were to recite the Lord's Prayer every day at the end of their ordinary prayer. That this was done there can be little doubt, for "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," which probably dates from the first century A.D., directs the Lord's Prayer to be said three times a day by all Christians.

Our Lord's followers would further regard the prayer as a badge of discipleship, something intended to distinguish the disciples of Jesus from all other men. For this reason among others, it has been regarded as the prayer of the Church, not of the world. So jealously was its secrecy guarded in early times, that like the Creed, it was only taught to catechumens just before their baptism, and was never used in those portions of public worship to which the heathen were admitted.—One Volume Commentary.

I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, Lk. 18.11. In a classification of Pharisees made by rabbinical writers, there is one called "The Pharisee who said, 'Would that I knew of a sin I had committed that I might make reparation by an act of virtue,'" and there is another called "The calculating Pharisee who said, 'My sins are more than counterbalanced by virtues,'" Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai said, "If there are only two righteous men in the world, I and my son are these; and if only one, it is I."

Cloister of the Pater Noster Church, Mount of Olives
The Lord's Prayer is inscribed on tablets in thirty-two languages.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Background of Matthew 6.5-13

According to Luke, the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, and in answer he gave them the prayer which we call "The Lord's Prayer." Either Jesus gave this prayer on two occasions, or else Matthew inserted it in The Sermon on the Mount in order to give a comprehensive view of what Jesus taught about prayer.

The "Mount" where the words of the Sermon were spoken may have been Mount Tabor or any of the hills near the Sea of Galilee. Tradition says it was Kurn Hattin, or the Horns of Hattin, a hill about five miles west of the lake.

The Background of Luke 18.9-14

In this chapter Luke gives the parable of The Unjust Judge, with its lesson of the value of persistent prayer, and follows it with the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, with its illustration of false and true prayer.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

In The Pilgrim Teacher once upon a time these prayers of two church school teachers were recorded:

The Pharisee. I praise God that I am not as other teachers are—irresponsible, neglectful, neither students of thy holy Word, nor attendants upon the services of thy church. As for me, I pray twice a day for the members of my class, and present to them, week by week, a carefully prepared and correctly taught lesson. In the precious sixty minutes consecrated to their instruction I do not turn aside from strict biblical teaching, neither do I allow conversation upon secular matters. Once yearly do I call at the homes of my pupils, with the intent of urging upon them interest in religious matters, and in cases of sickness I present myself at the bedside, to administer spiritual consolation.

And when, as is too often the case, in spite of my endeavors, pupils who have had the benefit of my endeavors stray away from the paths of righteousness, I count myself blameless.

The Publican. God of love and purity, I am unworthy of the task I have undertaken—the task of unveiling before thy children thy face. I am overwhelmed with the weakness of the hand that attempts to draw aside the veil. I am filled with fear lest my faultiness obscure for them thy perfect goodness. Oh, may that faultiness fill me with infinite sympathy for their shortcomings! Show me how to keep open the door of confidence between them and me, so that they may be able to tell me their troubles. May I be so close a friend that they will want me near in sickness. May I be such a companion that their pleasures will be incomplete without me.

They are thy lambs, and if they stray away from thy fold, mine is perchance the blame, and mine, in any event, the task to search for them, and bring them back to the great Shepherd of their souls.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS
THE CHRISTIAN'S PRAYER LIFE

Beginning the Lesson

"If half a dozen persons talk to you at the same time, you cannot give intelligent attention to any of them. Do you think God can give intelligent attention to each one of the millions that talk to him, in the same sense that we can to one person at a time? Does it seem as if we can believe in such amazing greatness?"

Who has not at one time or another asked himself just such a question as this? Lyman Abbott cites cases where men have given attention to two or three trains of thought at the same moment. If human spirits can do this, cannot the Great Spirit give attention to innumerable messages? "We may not be able to conceive the greatness, but we can believe that it exists. How God hears all these his children and answers their requests, we cannot picture to ourselves. But if there is any truth in human testimony, any trustworthiness in human experience, no fact is more certain than the fact that prayers are somehow heard and answered."

What was the teaching of Jesus in regard to prayer? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Why I Believe in Prayer

The value which prayer may have in my life rests with me. If I wish my friend in New York to talk with me over the telephone, I must take down the receiver, put it to my ear and listen. He may be ever so willing and ready to talk, but he cannot talk to me until I do my part. In prayer we not only want God to hear from us: we want to hear from him. Prayer is the act of taking down the receiver.

I believe in prayer for three reasons:

1. Because I believe in God. His character is such that he will want to help those who appeal to him. A cold, selfish, indifferent God would not be God. He works within me, helping me to help myself and to help others.

2. Because I believe in the testimony of the best people I have ever known. I do not base any faith in prayer on happy coincidences or striking occurrences, but rather on those broad and usual results that come to those who pray in sincerity and truth. How much it means that Lincoln, Gladstone, Foch, were all men of prayer! My personal life, my home and the various activities in which I have engaged have been so blessed and enriched as the result of prayer that I count it the highest asset of my life.

3. I believe in prayer because Jesus Christ believed in prayer. He had more to

say about prayer than any one whose records are recorded in the Bible. He left one prayer so beautiful, so comprehensive, so satisfying, that it has been taken up all over the world. It has been uttered this day in more than three hundred languages of earth.—Dean Charles R. Brown.

Prayer Is not Magic

Prayer may mean so much in one's life, but often it means so little! Does it mean much in your life? Do you believe that it is the source of power? In what way is it the source of power?

The grade down an avenue in a near-by town is steep and the street has a dangerous curve. Mr. Jones crossed the avenue at the top of the grade, and found Charlie standing there with closed eyes. Willie could be seen speeding down the hill on a sled toward the acute portion of the curve. "It seems to me you boys could find a safer place to coast," said he to Charlie. Charlie opened his eyes and looked at Mr. Jones reproachfully. "You may have been the death of him," said he. "This is a risky hill, but it's great fun, and we've got a trick to make it safe. One of us coasts while the other stays at the top and prays."

These boys in this true story were passing through the preparatory stages of religion which belong to the savages' approaches to civilization. Such a religion is magic, which tries, not to bring man into subjection to God, but to bring the gods into subjection to man. If the truth could be known, there would be revealed a surprising number of Christians who look upon prayer as a sort of magic by which things may be obtained—largely for oneself and one's immediate friends. Make sure that you eradicate this idea today.

The Power of Prayer

Prayer is the channel—and every man digs his own prayer-channel—through which the streams of God's purpose flow into and through you. Through prayer we bring to naught the gray old iniquities hiding away in the dungeons of our being; through prayer we summon the angels of our better nature into full-chorded minstrelsy. Do you not recall those unforgettable words of Coleridge about music? "The silent air," he sings, "is Music slumbering on her instrument." Yes, the air is silent and Music is there, but slumbering—asleep. But hearken! The musician comes with his tuned wires, and he sweetly and tunefully awakens the silent air to music—music always and everywhere sleeping in the silent air. Likewise does praying awaken the powers, the ideals, the visions, the victories, the hopes, the love slumbering in the soul. What a neglected power is prayer—humanity's mightiest unused force!

A friend relates this incident: A gentleman in Chicago found himself going to pieces because of wrongness in the great business concern of which he was a part. The situation seemed irremediable; things had gotten beyond his control, and, apparently, beyond everybody's control. Driven almost to despair, this man went to his room, shut himself in, and prayed—prayed for the help of God. He got it, and got it forthwith. Immediately his chaos in business was strangely touched into concord. Are not most of us made to marvel at these spiritual facts and forces? And why? Because we are strangers to them, though they are the soul-stuff of life. Oh, why will we resort to every method but the right method? Why tap every source but the true source?—Frederick F. Shannon, in The Infinite Artist.

Why Do Students Pray?

A graduate student in a university sent out a questionnaire and upon the answers returned based his thesis for the degree of Ph.D., by which he undertook to find out why college students pray. A newspaper writer summed up the result thus: "Bunions, Love, Exams, Make Students Pray."

An editorial in The Christian Century refers to this headline and declares that this summary of the motives for prayer is not so bad. "Generalizing upon these specifications, one may say that these are the chief reasons why anybody prays, at least so far as concerns prayer in the interest of the supplicant himself. 'Bunions.' That is to say, personal suffering. One needs no extreme theory about the unreality of evil or the magical influence of the divine mind upon the human body to feel that, somewhere in the universe, there is either a store of vitality which may, in some undefined way, be available to supplement the ministrations of medicine or a center of power from which may be drawn strength to meet the crisis. People do pray when they are sick. Still more do they pray for their sick friends. 'Love.' What more urgent impulse to prayer than hunger of the heart, the conscious need of companionship, or the emotional overflow of exultant joy when heart finds heart and a personal relationship seems transfigured into a cosmic event. 'Exams.' Not only at the end of

academic terms but now and again in the experience of everyone come crises, the meeting of which requires the summoning of all one's accumulated resources of wisdom, of fortitude, of energy. Life cannot be ironed out to a plateau of unvarying levels. It has its valleys of depression and its peaks of difficulty for which one's individual powers appear obviously inadequate. Yes, 'bunions, love, and exams.' Not so bad—for a headline writer."

Is Prayer Essential to the Christian Life?

The experiment was once made in India of taking a number of children at birth and keeping them together under the charge of nurses who were ordered, under penalty of death, not to utter a spoken word. The children were kept through childhood, and they practically became idiots. Their minds were dwarfed from lack of communication with others. In much the same way, may not spiritual life be dwarfed through lack of communion with the divine Spirit?

Prevailing Prayer Is Unselfish

Mrs. Hilton came one day to her pastor in great perplexity. "I've prayed and prayed and never got any answer," she told him. "Surely prayer is the most important thing in the world—real prayer—the kind that gets answers. I always pray, 'Thy will be done.'"

In reply Dr. Mercer said: "I want you to go home and think some questions over and see whether somewhere among them you do not find an answer to your puzzle. When you pray for certain things do you pray in a spirit of love toward everyone as far as you know? The first words of Christ's prayer are 'Our Father.' Then do you care dearly about the coming of God's Kingdom upon earth? Are you working for it, giving for it, praying for it and trying to make it come everywhere that your influence reaches? Is your first concern not to fail God in any of the tasks and the opportunities that he has put before you? Are you pressing the great sorrow of the world to your heart until it hurts, and you have to go and tell God all about it? Or have your prayers been only for yourself and one or two who are dear to you?"

"You make it so—hard," Mrs. Hilton faltered.

"Hard at first, perhaps, while we are wrestling with the envy, the jealousy, the bitterness and the selfishness that come between our hearts and God's great love; but not half so hard as going year after year without the knowledge that the Infinite Father is working through us."—Adapted from The Youth's Companion.

The Privilege of Prayer

The privilege of prayer to me is one of my most cherished possessions, because faith and experience alike convince me that God himself sees and answers, and his answers I never venture to criticise. It is only my part to ask. It is entirely his to give or withhold as he knows is best. If it were otherwise, I would not dare to pray at all. In the quiet of home, in the heat of life and strife, in the face of death, the privilege of speech with God is inestimable. I value it more because it calls for nothing that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot give—that is, the simplest expression to his simplest desire. When I can neither see nor hear, nor speak, still I can pray so that God can hear. When I finally pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I expect to pass through it in conversation with him.—Wilfred Grenfell.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Why should we pray? See Prayer: What It Is and What It Does, by Samuel McComb; The Double Search, by Rufus M. Jones; The Meaning of Prayer, by Harry Emerson Fosdick.

2. Our greatest need is not so much to have the problems in regard to prayer answered, as it is to rightly practice prayer.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. How did Peter grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ? 2. What is the force of the words "Thou shalt be called Cephas"? 3. What does Paul have to say about Christian growth in Ephesians 4.11-16; 6.10-18; Phil. 1.9-11; 3.12-16? 4. Is it possible for a Christian just to "hold his own" spiritually? 5. What must one do in order to grow mentally and spiritually?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

WHY SHOULD WE PRAY?

Beginning the Lesson

What does the word *hypocrite* mean? As the Greeks used the word from which

it is derived, it meant one who played a part on the stage. A player, or actor, takes the part of some one, pretends for the time being to be some one else. So the hypocrite is a pretender: he says or does things to make others think he is different from what he is, or better than he is.

When William Ellis, the noted missionary, was translating the New Testament into the Malagasy language, he could not find out the word for *hypocrite*. He explained its meaning to the people, and asked what he could say that would express its thought. "I know, I know," cried a native, "it is to put a clean mat over a dirty floor."

How did Jesus say the hypocrites of his day showed their hypocrisy in their praying? They loved to stand at the corners of the street and pray, they gave alms, they fasted, they kept the Sabbath, they were apparently pious men. But they were hypocrites, actors in a religious play, for they were but playing a well-calculated part, their religion was a thing of outward show, not of inward feeling. They gave alms, not because they loved the poor, but because they would be seen giving alms; they prayed in public places, not because they felt the need of communion with God, but because they would be known for piety. They never deceived Jesus, and he was unsparing in his denunciation of such motives. What did he say about their reward? What did he mean by this?

What Jesus Taught about Prayer

Jesus has something to say about the place for prayer. What is it? "When thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret." Go into your own room, the place where you can be alone, and pray. But what about the church, the street, the fields, the train—can't you pray there? Does Jesus mean that you are not to pray in such places? By no means. He did it himself; he prayed in the open, on the hillside, in the synagogue. And what he did you may do. You can pray anywhere, if you pray in the right spirit. But if you want a real talk with God, where you can tell him all that is in year heart, where you will be free from all interruptions, there is no place like your own room at home.

Jesus has something to say about the manner of prayer. There are to be no vain repetitions. Are you not, then, to ask twice for the same thing, to repeat twice the same words of praise or gratitude? Jesus did. He prayed the same prayer three times in the Garden of Gethsemane. And if three times, why not thirty? You may ask for something as many times as you like. Jesus does not say there are to be no repetitions, but no vain ones. What is a vain repetition? Something that is repeated formally, without thinking, without any heart in it—a sort of parrot cry; such words are vain, simply useless, just wasted breath. For an example of good repetitions read the story of the Canaanitish woman who came to Jesus with a request for her daughter. An earnest repetition, one spoken with all the heart, is a good repetition. Jesus, in fact, gave a parable that tells us to repeat our desires, to be importunate in prayer. It preceded the parable of our text from Luke: who will tell it?

Jesus has something to say about the spirit of prayer. There is to be no vanity about our praying, no praying to be seen of men, to make others think well of us. There is to be no self-righteousness about it, no praying with a feeling in our hearts that we are very good to do it, a great deal better than people who never pray at all. We have one of Jesus' parables today that teaches this thought: what is it? The Pharisee was thinking only of himself, he was not thinking about God at all. The publican was thinking about God as well as about his own need of him; he meant every word he said. A traveler in Japan the other day attended a meeting where many women were trying to memorize the Lord's Prayer. There was much noise and confusion, and one old woman went into a corner and repeated a prayer of her own. It was short, and she said it softly, again and again: "O Lords—athankful and unworthy." Hers was a prayer that must have pleased Jesus as much as did the publican's.

There is to be no self-will about our prayers, no insisting that God do what we ask and in the way we want. On the contrary, there must be humility, charity and resignation. Christ's prayer, "Thy will, not mine, be done," is a model for us.

Place and language and mode—standing, sitting, kneeling—these things are not of the greatest importance. It is the spirit in which we pray that counts.

How Not to Pray

Scatterbrains is a good boy, and he kneels down every morning when he leaves

his bed, and again at night, before he lies down. I was going to say that he knelt down to pray; but I'm afraid he does not do much praying. Praying, you know, is talking to God; and one has to think of the person to whom one is speaking. But when Scatterbrains is down on his knees his thoughts are flying off in all directions. He may be saying with his lips, "Our Father, who art in heaven," but he is thinking of the game he was playing in the afternoon, or wondering whether he brought his baseball bat into the house. God cannot feel that Scatterbrains cares very much for him, so very little of Scatterbrains's mind and heart ever go up to meet him.—Henry S. Coffin.

If God Knows What We Need, why Should we Ask Him for Things?

"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him," Jesus declared. Then why should you ask him for your daily bread? Your parents know what is good for you: why do you ask them for what you want? Would they like it if you never expressed a wish to them?

"We much want tobacco, calico and tomahawks and knives," was the prayer of a cannibal chief, and a learned minister thinks that prayer was pleasing to God, for it was a foolish child who came to his wise Father, and by and by, coming often to that Father, he would learn better what to ask.

"I must come to God with my poor little human prayers because he is my Father and I am his child, and if I do not speak to him, nor he to me, the sweet relation is lost. He is no more my Father, nor I his child. And I may ask him for anything I like, because he is my Father, but coming to him often I learn that there are many things it is useless to give, that the things best for me are the things my loving Father longs to give; that the best prayer is prayer that I may know what these are, and desire them above all, and love and trust him more and more. For the best prayer is not asking for things, it is the quiet hour when the child is alone with his Father seeking his guidance, receiving his strength, resting in his infinite love."

Prayer Is Answered

"Supposing one prayed in the right spirit and with perfect faith, is his prayer sure to be answered?" Bob Graham demanded of his minister.

"It depends upon what you mean by answer," said Dr. Brown. "If you mean, does everyone always receive the thing for which he prays, thank God, no, he doesn't. If we did, we should live in the midst of chaos indescribable. Then the world would be ruled, not by an All Wise Father, but by every ignorant but honest man who prayed. Thank God, that is not the way the world is run!

"But in a deeper sense, every sincere prayer, without exception, is answered. It's a great deal as it was with my granddaughter the other day. The little girl was tired and sleepy and fretful. She asked for something or other, and when it was given her she asked at once for something else. She kept it up for some time. The truth is, she didn't know what she wanted. Finally her mother just gathered her up in her arms and laid the little one's head on her breast and rocked and soothed her, and the little girl lay there utterly content. The mother did not give her the thing she asked for, but she did go beneath the request and answer the child's need and even the child's desire."

"It's really true, then, that all prayers are answered?" said Bob.

"Every real prayer is always answered," said Dr. Brown. "Nothing in human experience is more certain."—The Youth's Companion.

Sentence Sermons

Prayer is a true wish sent Godward.—Phillips Brooks.

"Prayer must mean something to us if it is to mean anything to God."

"Self-centeredness in prayer is as hurtful as selfishness in anything else."

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Who is the John mentioned in the first verse of our lesson? 2. Where were Jesus and the disciples when the conversation of our second selection occurred? 3. What question and answer preceded the one in our text? 4. What made Peter a follower of Jesus? 5. How did Peter grow in his knowledge of Jesus? 6. Where were Jesus and the disciples in our third text? 7. What does Luke 2.52 tell us about the way Jesus grew as a boy? 8. What must we do to follow Peter's counsel in our Golden Text?

CHRISTIAN GROWTH

GOLDEN TEXT: But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3.18a

LESSON John 1.40-42; Matthew 16.15-18; John 21.15-19; Luke 2.40, 52; Ephesians 4.11-16; Philippians 1.6, 9-11; 3.12-16; Colossians 1.9-11; Hebrews 6.1-3.
DEVOTIONAL READING John 15.1-8

JOHN 1.40 One of the two that heard John *speak,* and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). 42 He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him, and said, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter).

MATTHEW 16.15 He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

JOHN 21.15 So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. 16 He saith to him again a second time, Simon, *son* of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. 17 He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

2 PETER 3.18 But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. BECOMING A FOLLOWER OF JESUS, John 1.40-42. After a day in the company of Jesus (read verses 35-39) Andrew sought his brother and told him that he and John had found the Messiah. Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek), mean "The Anointed One." Hebrew kings were anointed with oil when given their office, and the Spiritual King was thought of as The Anointed, The Chosen One of God, until The Anointed, the Christ, became the name by which he was designated. Then Andrew brought Peter to Jesus.

The nearer another is to us, the greater our responsibility for him. Our own brothers and sisters know us better than do those outside the family circle; they know our faults and failings, and therefore we shrink from talking to them about our spiritual experiences. It may require courage to do this, but our Christianity is shallow if we cannot do it.

As he looked upon Andrew's brother, Jesus said, "Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas." *Cephas,* the Aramaic name, and *Petros,* Peter, the Greek name, mean *a stone,* a detached piece of rock. Jesus knew Peter was too impulsive to be reliable; but he also knew that he would become the rock on which he would one day build his church (Mt. 16.13-19). "In a gallery in Europe there hang side by side Rembrandt's first picture, a simple sketch, imperfect and faulty, and his great masterpiece which all men admire. And so in the two names, Simon and Peter, we have first a rude fisherman, the man as he was before Jesus began his work on him; and, second, the man as he became after the friendship of Jesus and the teaching of Jesus and the discipline of life had wrought the transformation in him" (J. R. Miller).

II. ACKNOWLEDGING JESUS AS THE CHRIST, Matthew 16.15-18. In our text from the first chapter of John we have seen Peter coming to Jesus and entering his school to learn of him. Now in Matthew sixteen we see how he has grown in his knowledge of Jesus Christ. Read The Historical Background. In answer to Jesus' question, "Who say ye that I am?" Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "The lowly origin of the Carpenter, the familiarity of daily intercourse, the shocks of disapproval, the delay of hopes making the heart sick, the haughty repudiation of Jesus by the authorized teachers of

Israel, the ebbing tide of his popularity in Galilee, might have almost justified a fisherman's inability to answer this momentous question. But in spite of all doubts and dreadful uncertainties, there was that in Simon's soul which leapt up in answer to the Master's word—wholeheartedness and a sudden sense of the greatness of the Reality in Jesus; impelled by this spirit he trampled down all doubts, and burst out in enthusiastic confession of faith and loyalty" (Wm. A. Grist).

"Read books about Christ. Can you not spend thirty minutes of each day in getting to know the Perfect Man? Take up the biographies of those simple, earnest men, the authors of the Gospels. Begin with Matthew. You read a few chapters, and you fall in love with the Man. Slowly the knowledge changes character, and then you say, 'My Lord and my God!'" (Henry Drummond).

"Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Paul).

Greatly moved, Jesus exclaimed, "Simon, son of John, human lips have not revealed this to you; the knowledge has come through my Father in heaven." "Peter's answer thrilled our Master to the depth. He was understood" (George H. Morrison).

As we have seen, Jesus earlier foretold that shifty Simon would attain a rock-like character. "Thou hast said that I am the Christ, and I also say unto thee that thou art Peter (*Petros,* Rock), and upon this rock (*Petra,* Rock), I will build my church," Jesus then affirmed: notice the play upon words in the Greek. "And the gates of Hades (the invisible world, the abode of the dead) shall not prevail against it," Jesus further added. "As the church is often represented as a city, so now its great adversary Death is poetically represented as a fortified city with walls and gates" (Dummelow). The church is indestructible.

"Peter was imperfect, to be sure, but the Kingdom of God does not rest on hard-and-fast infallibilities in man. In the Peters there is enough soundness, not to make a perfect kingdom, but to make one that will stand. The thought of Jesus concerning the possibilities of the Peter-type as foundation stone is prophetic of the permanence of the church, and, it may be said, of Christian society as well" (Francis J. McConnell).

III. RE-COMMISSIONED FOR THE SERVICE OF THE CHRIST, John 21.15-19. For two years Jesus had been teaching the disciples and training them to carry on his work after he should leave them. Now that time had come. Peter had failed his Lord and Master at his trial; would he be trusted again? After the disciples had partaken of that early morning repast on the Sea of Galilee (read The Historical Background), Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these other disciples love me?" Peter had boasted, at that last supper, "If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended" (Mt. 26-33) and then, that same night, had thrice denied his Lord. Now, no longer self-assertive but thoroughly humbled, he replied, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." "Feed my lambs," returned Jesus, thus telling Peter that he would have a chance to redeem himself. A second time Jesus asked the same question, and received the same reply. "Feed my sheep," said Jesus. When Jesus asked his question a third time, Peter was grieved and said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." "Thou knowest that the deepest thing in my heart is my love to thee. By that love which has borne no fruit, which has failed in the hour of need, which has been mastered by fear, but which is real and is my very soul, by that let me be judged" (John Watson). "Feed my sheep," said Jesus.

"'Man, woman, lovest thou me?' is the question that in every age Christ addresses to each human soul. On the answer to that question, spoken in terms of everyday living, everything depends. The trouble is that many people if they honestly put their answer into words would say:

"'No, Lord, we don't love you; that's going too far. But we argue about you, and analyze you into elements of humanity and divinity and explain you in conflicting theories. We spend a good deal of time doing this, and, as we are busy people, we have no time left to love you. In fact, we have very little time to love anybody. In our opinion love is terribly inefficient and old-fashioned. Some day we will invent a good substitute.'

"It sounds pretty raw, doesn't it? But in so far as religion is a failure today that is the reason. It lacks love" (Tertius van Dyke).

THE VALLEY BELOW MT. HERMON

In the region of Cæsarea Philippi

IV. CHRISTIAN GROWTH, 2 Peter 3.18. "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," counsels Peter in his Second Epistle. *"Grow* sums up in one word the admonitions of First and Second Peter" (Dummelow).

"What though Time cuts his furrows in my face
My heart may ever add grace unto grace,
Graces with added days still keeping pace,
O that I may grow!" (Maltbie D. Babcock).

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Background of John 1.40-42

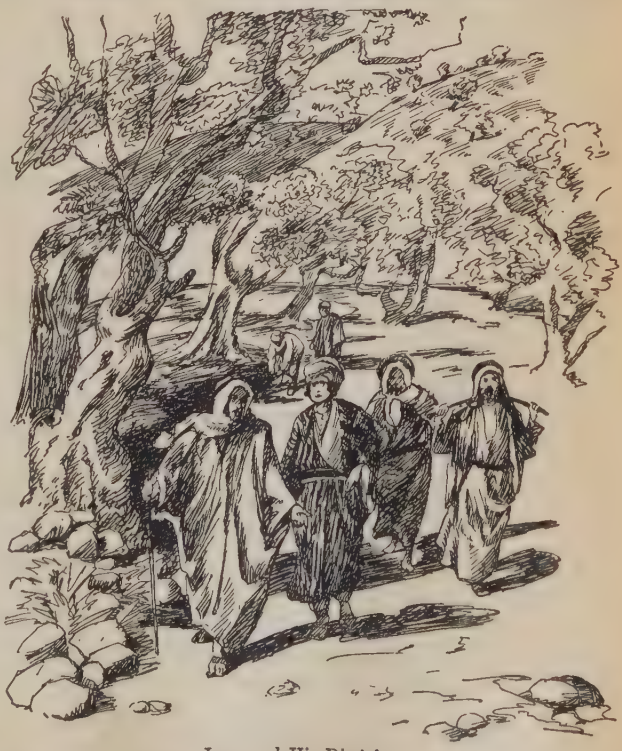
One day John the Baptist was at Bethany beyond the Jordan with two of his disciples, Andrew and probably John, when he saw Jesus in the distance and said to them, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The disciples followed Jesus and tarried with him that day. Then Andrew hastened to tell Peter, his brother, of Jesus the Christ.

The Background of Matthew 16.15-18

When the ministry of Jesus was drawing to a close, and the crucifixion was only a few months away, he went northward with his disciples into the region of Cæsarea Philippi, at the base of Mount Hermon. The disciples had long companied with him, but did they know him to be the Christ? He asked them who men thought him to be, and they answered, "Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." Then Jesus put his great question to them: "But who say ye that I am?"

The Background of John 21.15-17

During the forty days which intervened between his resurrection and ascension, Jesus appeared ten times to his disciples, as recorded in the Gospels and The Acts. John tells of Christ's appearance to the ten in the absence of Thomas, and of his appearance again to them a week later when Thomas was present and was convinced that it was the Lord. Then he records the incident on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.



Jesus and His Disciples

Five of the disciples, Peter, James, John, Thomas and Nathanael, were together when Peter announced his intention of going fishing. The others decided to go with him. They toiled all night, but caught nothing. At daybreak Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not recognize him. "Have you anything to eat?" Jesus called. "No," came the reply. Then said Jesus, "Cast the net on the right side of

the boat, and you will find the fish." They obeyed, and were scarcely able to draw the net in, so heavily weighted was it with the catch.

John was the first to discern that the Stranger was the Lord, and Peter at once jumped overboard and swam ashore. "Come and break your fast," was the invitation which Jesus gave the disciples when they had all landed. They partook of bread and fish, and when the meal was over, Jesus turned to Peter with his questions.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

No one can teach in the moral and spiritual realm with greatest effectiveness that which he does not himself believe with depth of conviction. You cannot kindle another by rote. That which does not greatly move you will scarcely greatly move another through you. This simply means that our effective teaching is necessarily confined to what is vitally real to us—to our real inner creed. For the sake of both the breadth and the effectiveness of one's teaching, one must seek to deepen and to extend his convictions; for there is no cheap way to become a good teacher of spiritual things.

You count yourselves, first and foremost, disciples of Jesus Christ, and the supreme aim of your teaching is to bring others into the same discipleship. This must mean, that either your living or your teaching is undertaken with full thoughtfulness, that you call yourselves Christians and have become teachers of the Christian faith because you believe that he from whom you take your name is the most significant Person of History. You believe that Christ's life and teaching have more light than any other fact of history to throw upon God, upon man, upon all the varied relations of God and Man, and so upon the practical problem of daily living in its deepest aspects. That is, you see God, men, and all of life through Christ.—Henry Churchill King, in Letters to Sunday-school Teachers.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

CONDITIONS OF CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Beginning the Lesson

In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul refers to the time when he could speak to them only as "babes in Christ." He was disappointed that the infant stage was so prolonged. "I fed you with milk," he says, "when I ought to have been feeding you with meat." Growth is the ideal for the Christian life. The standard which Christ sets before us is nothing short of perfection. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," he declares.

Our several texts lead us to a brief consideration of how Peter began the Christian life, what possibilities Jesus saw in his nature for growth, and how he grew in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Right About Face, March!

We speak of "becoming Christians," as though a Christian character were attained once for all: the Christian writers of the fourth century spoke of "Making Christians," as though it was a gradual process.

The usual verb for "be converted" in the Greek New Testament means literally "be turned around," as a flower to the sun, be faced about as a ship in its right course. Robert Louis Stevenson in telling how he gave up a life of idleness for one of work and service, does not use the word "converted," but says instead, "I came about like a well-handled ship. There stood at the wheel that unknown Steersman whom we call God."

After a ship is turned in the right direction it must be kept on its course by a pilot at the wheel. It cannot be turned and then left without constant guidance. After a man is turned consciously toward God he must keep himself under the Great Pilot's guidance. The command "Right about face" is followed by another, "March."

We are told that the three thousand who were converted on the Day of Pentecost "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." Their natures were not at once entirely transformed; they could only become gradually changed. They continued. This Pentecostal church was instructed concerning the way of salvation, and continued to grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord.

Growing New Wood

In Longfellow's declining years a friend asked him how it was possible for him to keep so energetic and write with such power. Pointing to an apple tree in bloom the poet replied: "That apple tree is very old, but I never saw prettier blossoms on it than those it now bears. The tree grows a little new wood each year, and I suppose it is out of that new wood that those blossoms come. Like the apple tree, I try to grow a little new wood each year."

Our spiritual natures should "grow new wood" each year and keep on "blossoming."

How Does the Soul Grow?

How does the soul grow? Not all in a minute;
Now it may lose ground, and now it may win it;
Now it resolves, and again the will faileth;
Now it rejoiceth, and now it bewaileth;
Now its hopes fructify, then they are blighted;
Now it walks suddenly, now gropes benighted;
Fed by discouragements, taught by disaster;
So it goes forward, now slower, now faster;
Till, all the pain past, and failure made whole,
It is full-grown, and the Lord rules the soul.—Susan Coolidge.

Conditions to Be Fulfilled in Order to Grow in Grace

Professor Drummond well says that to try to make a thing grow is as absurd as to try to help the tide come in, or the sun rise. No one would think of telling a boy to grow physically. He grows without trying. One or two simple conditions are fulfilled by habit, without thought, and the growth goes on, the result follows by nature.

Equally true is this of growth in grace; one needs only to fulfil the conditions and to give himself no concern about the result.

What are one or two of the conditions? First is prayer. Prayer is to the spirit what food is to the body, it brings to the spiritual nature strength from the Infinite Nature. Second is service. Service is to the spirit what exercise is to the body; it is the active side of spiritual development, transforming into deeds the divine energy received through prayer. Fulfil these conditions and favor with God and man will result.

Dr. Hillis has graphically told the process by which Dwight L. Moody gained and used mental and spiritual strength. "Mr. Moody was a widow's son. He was unschooled when he went to Boston to begin his career at seventeen; was refused entrance to the church because he did not understand what was involved; after six months was received; went to Chicago at eighteen; was refused a class in the Sunday-school because he could not read well; finally obtained permission to form a class of his own; the next Sunday morning came in triumphant, followed by eighteen ragamuffins; rented a room on the North Side; when he could not speak for himself, committed the Bible to memory and recited it in prayer-meeting, for he was determined to speak; since he had no information of his own to give to the boys, read from the writings of others; learned to pray by praying; learned to speak by speaking; learned to meet men by meeting them; and finally became one of the greatest forces for good in the nineteenth century. What has been done can be done. This law of growth by exercise is for all."

A Religious Binet Test

"He has the mind of a child ten years of age," declared an eminent psychologist testifying recently concerning a man of forty-seven accused of a serious crime. "What is your mental age?" is rapidly becoming the predominating test of development.

"How old are you religiously?" is a question that might well be asked of the average professing Christian. We do not mean how long since you were converted. That's your chronological table. We are interested in your spiritual development rather than your time-serving religious calendar.

A Binet test includes one's memory, discrimination, reasoning, etc. During the war it was discovered that three per cent of our service men ranked beneath the intelligence of a ten-year-old child. One of the objects of a Binet test is to ascertain not only the artificial accumulation of facts, but the ability of the mind to react. What a wonderful thing it would be could the spiritual capacity of the average

man be measured! "Thou hast made us for thyself, and we know no rest until we find it in thee," wrote Augustine. But how much does the average man react to spiritual ideals? We have talked about man being created "in his image." Can this fact be tested? What would be the response of the ordinary citizen to vital religious stimuli?

We urge that without shrinking you answer the following questionnaire honestly and then determine for yourself your own spiritual age:

1. Is religion your first, second, third, or last interest? Can you scare up more enthusiasm for a world series, a political rally or a Rotary Club than you can for world redemption?

2. What is your first thought of the day? If certain psychologists are correct in stating that our waking thought may be a controlling idea or that our last thought before sleep dominates our subconscious mind, do we give God therein a dominant place?

3. Is God close or far from your life? Does your God dwell in the sky? Is he an absentee landlord type of deity? Are you conscious of an indwelling presence in your daily relationships?

4. Are you conscious of divine sonship? Do you react to the ideal of the Fatherhood of God in a personal way? Are you conscious of a deeper self that seems eternal?

5. Do you take time daily for soul cultivation? Do you feed your soul? What? Why? Would the starting of the day by saturating your mind with the holiest thoughts and experiences of the world's saints be worth your while?

6. In times of stress are you conscious of God as an ally? Is God more than a name to you? Have you grown beyond the totem pole stage in your thought of him?

7. Is your religion good for times of adversity? If you lost your money or your job, where would God come in?

8. Does religion make you conscious of your faults? Do you practice the comparison of your motives with those of Jesus? Has your religious experience made you tender toward obscure personal faults such as egotism, pride, dominance—intellectual and otherwise—pessimism, self-pity, etc.?

9. Have you contagious overflow of spiritual life? Is it easy for folks to be good in your presence? Do your friends feel free to swear, tell risqué stories, talk freely about questionable conduct in your company? Can you dispel gloom and pessimism by a sunshiny faith? Do folks come to you with spiritual problems? Have you found that men talk with you of the things of the spirit?

10. Does the sharing of your religious life with others appeal to you? Have you ever won a soul to Christ? Have you certain folks now on your heart whom you would like to enlist for Kingdom building? Are you praying for them?

11. How much time do you devote to Kingdom building? You work eight hours for a living. How much to build a life? You work six days a week for the physical well-being of your family. How much time do you devote to their spiritual growth and nurture?

12. Do you select pleasures that abide, or those that are temporal? Would you sooner see a movie comedy than a Shakespearian play? Have you a hobby that is making you a better man therefor? Does your club or lodge or social life contribute to your growth?

13. Are you apt to choose ease, or struggle? Do you build your life along lines of least resistance, or does the storm present a challenge? Do you feel the call of life's mountain peaks? Do you get the blues in the midst of a crisis, or does it call forth fighting blood?

14. Is money a means or an end in your life? Have you some idea what you want money for? Have you a worth-while object for which to spend your earnings? Do you view your money as yours or as belonging to God?

15. Do you seek to serve or dominate your fellows? Is your ideal of success that of directing others? Is there an intellectual or religious imperialism? If so, is it Christian?

16. Are you willing to forgive those who have wronged you? Do you find resentment and revenge in your attitude towards your enemies? Are you prejudiced against certain folks? Why? What does hatred do to you?

17. Are you conscious that life is a stewardship? Has your Creator any claim upon your life? What would he have you do? Are you conscious that your work is his work? Will the world be better for your service?

Judged by these—how old are you religiously?—Condensed from an Article in The Christian Advocate, by George S. Lackland.

The Vast Possibilities in Each One

"Simon" was a man of fickle impulse, undependable, slipping out of one's grasp like a handful of sand. "Peter" was rock, granite, invincible as the everlasting hills. I wonder how the sand felt the first time it was called rock! Oh, how should I feel if the Lord were now to appear and address me by that tremendous name? The new name did not describe the man as he was. It described the man he might be, and the man he was to be. It was not the name of a man who had arrived, but the name of a man who was on a journey.

Here, then, is a glimpse into one of our Lord's methods in training those whom he had chosen for his work. He fixed his thought on the vast possibilities which stretched before them. He thought of the people in terms of what they would be. Whilst they were still learning the alphabet he saw them familiar with the highest literature. When they were just learning to walk he saw them as finished athletes.

When the Lord gave a man a new name it was a call from the heights. And how inspiring it would be! It would arouse like the sound of a bugle. Surely Simon would pull himself together when Christ called him Peter. Surely he stretched himself toward his suggested stature.

And this is how our Savior thinks of thee and me. We are called "children of God," "children of light," "heirs of God," "joint-heirs with Christ," "saints of the household of faith." How greatly he thinks of us!—J. H. Jowett, in The Friend on the Road.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Is Jesus Christ to me today all that he came to be?—Robert E. Speer.

2. If you wish to nourish faith, speak it.—Alexander Maclaren.

3. Christian growth. See Chapter IV of Jesus Christ and the Christian Character, by F. G. Peabody; Chapter XIX in Christ and Man, by Marcus Dods.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Why do we need to go to church? 2. Why do we need to be a member of a church? 3. How far is church membership essential to personal Christianity? 4. What does the member owe his church? 5. What is the church for? 6. If the church is the body of Christ, what may he do through it in our community?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

GROWING UP—TO WHAT?

Beginning the Lesson

Who first told Peter about Jesus? What proof did Andrew give to Peter when he told him about Jesus? When Peter first saw Jesus, how did Jesus greet him? How would such a greeting impress him?

Peter was impulsive, we know. Do you remember how he once tried walking on the water? But he waited until he had lived with Jesus for some time, all the while quietly studying his life and his words, before he was sure that he knew Jesus. Then one day Jesus asked the disciples a great question. What was it? What was Peter's answer? He had grown in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

What is our topic today? What would be your answer to that question?

Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of our Lord

Peter came to Jesus and became his disciple, and Jesus saw in him great possibilities of growth. Peter is the disciple whom we think of as much like ourselves, because he made so many mistakes, needed so much instruction, was often so undependable, and even after having more than two years of close living with his Master sinned grievously and denied him. Jesus said in the beginning of their life together that Peter should be called Cephas, which means a rock. He knew that Peter would grow in grace and in the knowledge of his Master till his vacillating nature would be changed to firmness. It is Peter himself who in his letter counsels us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.

There are two kinds of knowledge of Jesus which may be ours in greater and greater degree: knowledge of the earthly life of Jesus as told in the Gospels, and increased personal acquaintance with the living Christ as our Brother and Savior.

We shall grow in grace as we strive to be more and more like him. "It will be the business of the true Christian," said William Wilberforce, "to be rooting out all the imperfections, and to be daily perfecting himself in the lineaments of the divine image." We cannot just "hold our own"; we must grow in our Christian life.

Definite Aim

In a home that I know there is a door jamb where are kept records of the growth of the children. When the woodwork is washed, the marks are carefully put back, together with the names and dates. About every month John, the fifteen-year-old boy, came to his mother and asked to be measured. Finally she asked, "What is the idea?" "I want to be six foot tall by the time I am eighteen," he replied, "and I want to make sure each month that I have gained the proper amount."

John had a definite aim and a definite desire, and yet his physical growth was largely beyond his control. "If I had a son," a famous professor once said, "I should tell him many times a day to make himself as big a man on the inside as possible." What did he mean? He meant that the aim of his son should be for the different kinds of growth of which our Golden Text speaks: what are they? Are such growths within the control of each one? How?

"There must be the reaching up lovingly after God, and more and more love of spiritual things. Then the spiritual life received must perform loving service for others. Dr. Babcock's famous receipt for growth was given in an acrostic: Go Right On Growing. While we are doing, we are growing. Exercise of goodness develops muscle of all kinds—muscle of body, mind, and spirit."

Growing Up—to What?

I never yet came in contact with a boy or girl who wanted to remain a boy and girl. Every boy and girl that I ever saw wanted to grow up. They were always thinking and talking about what they would do, or wanted to do, when they grew up.

It is up to you how you grow up and in what way you take hold of things. If you do not want to study, you will find a hundred ways of shirking. If you do not want to do what you are told to do, you will find scores of excuses. If you want to study, no matter how hard the lessons are, or how difficult, you will find means of getting them. If you want to obey, you will find the way to obey. It is up to you.

Here are some of the means by which you can grow up to be men and women who amount to something.

First—Grow up and not down. No boy or girl wants to become less in height as the months and years go by. They desire to measure up in inches and not be dwarfs. Grow up likewise in mental and moral things. Aim to stand higher in your classes. Strive to have better thoughts about your associates.

Second—Grow straight and not crooked. A boy or girl, crooked of body, is a sad sight; every one can see it. But a worse thing is a boy or girl who is crooked with the truth or crooked morally. And the trouble about the whole matter is that they do not think that other people see their crookedness. Grow straight. Be square in all your dealings with your fellows. Think straight. Talk straight. Act straight.

Third—"Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." If you take him with you, you may always be sure of growing up right.—Henry T. Sell, in Sermons in Objects.

Sentence Sermons

Life with Jesus gets a vision of the truth about Jesus.—William F. McDowell.

We should make our notch every day in our character, as Robinson Crusoe on his stick.—Thoreau.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Why should you be loyal to your church? 2. Do you say "it" or "we" in referring to the church you attend? 3. What does it mean to be a church member? 4. What are the reasons for joining a church? 5. What opportunities for fellowship does your church afford? For service? For worship? 6. If you are not a member of a church, is there any reason why you should not be?

LESSON IX—MARCH 3

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

GOLDEN TEXT: So we, who are many, are one body in Christ. Romans 12.5

LESSON Matthew 16.13-20; Mark 4.26-32; Romans 12.4-8; Ephesians 1.15-23; 2.13-22; 4.4-6, 11-16; 5.22-27; 1 Timothy 3-15.
DEVOTIONAL READING Ephesians 4.11-16

MARK 4.26 And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; 27 and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. 28 The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 29 But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come. 30 And he said, How shall we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable shall we set it forth? 31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be less than all the seeds that are upon the earth, 32 yet when it is sown, groweth up, and becometh greater than all the herbs, and putteth out great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.

EPHESIANS 1.22 And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

4.4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.

11 And he gave some *to be* apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: 13 till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; 15 but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, *even* Christ; 16 from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in *due* measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS A GROWING CHURCH, Mark 4.26-32. And Jesus said, "So is the Kingdom of God," that is, What you see to be God's method of working in Nature is also his method of working in the spiritual realm. The parables of Jesus show us that the term "the Kingdom of God" has to do with man's spiritual nature and possibilities, his inner life; it is the reign of God in the hearts of men. The Kingdom of God is as if a man should cast seed upon the earth—as Jesus and the apostles and his later followers have implanted the word of God in the hearts of men. After having sown the seed, the planter sleeps by night and rises by day; that is, he leads his customary life and leaves the result of the sowing with God. And the seed springs up and grows, he knoweth not how.

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower;—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all and all in all,
I should know what God and man is" (Tennyson).

The earth beareth fruit of herself.

"We plough the fields and scatter
The good seed o'er the land;
But it is fed and watered
By God's Almighty hand.

The growth of the plant is gradual but marked by progressive stages—first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. The same is true of spiritual growth.

"Nothing great is produced suddenly, not even a grape or a fig. If you say to me that you want a grape or a fig now, I will answer you that you

cannot have it; a grape takes time. Let it flower first, then it will put forth its fruit, and then ripen. And would you have the fruit of a man's life and character all in a moment? Do not expect it" (Epictetus).

"The Kingdom of God, then, is a growth. It begins with a seed; it grows on to the harvest. In this growth are three necessary elements: first, the beginning, the point of departure; second, a goal, a termination to which the progress is directed; and, third, the pathway between the beginning and the goal, leading from one to the other. This is the law of progress in all things— a *terminus ab quo,* a *terminus ad quem,* and a pathway between the two. He who remains in the present, anchored to it, does not progress. He who cuts himself apart from the present does not know progress. He only understands the law of progress who begins with the present, vitalizing the past, and proceeds out of that past and present toward the proposed future" (Lyman Abbott).

But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come. Recall Longfellow's beautiful words:

When the autumn
Changed the long, green leaves to yellow,
And the soft and juicy kernels
Grew like wampum hard and yellow,
Then the ripened ears he gathered,
Stripped the withered husks from off them,
And made known unto the people
This new gift of the Great Spirit.

The parable which we have just considered portrays the growth of the Kingdom in the individual; Jesus next gave a parable which portrays the growth of the visible Church. The rabbis called the smallest possible quantity "the quantity of a grain of mustard"; the mustard seed was the smallest seed cultivated by the Jews. Jesus likens the Kingdom of God to this tiny seed which when grown has branches in whose shade the birds can lodge. When it is sown, it groweth up. "Who ever thought of hoeing or weeding the mustard seed?" a Chinese minister questioned. "When it takes root it has power in itself to grow in spite of all obstacles."

II. THE FUNCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS TO EMBODY THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, Ephesians 1.22, 23. A. S. Peake gives this rendering of these verses: All things God subjected beneath the feet of Christ, and gave him as supreme Head of the Church which is his embodiment, the fulfilment of him who in all things universally is being fulfilled. "The Church as a spiritual organism is the complement of Christ, that is, the medium for the complete expression of his life, his power, his glory. If there were no Christians, Christ would be incomplete. Until all are Christians, Christ has not come to his full expression" (John Gardner).

"It is a deeply solemn thought, and one quick with inspiration and hope, that the Spirit of the living Christ seeks reincarnation in the fellowship of those who believe in him. In vital reality he would be embodied in the corporate life of our own day. The scriptural metaphor is no remote figure of speech, dimly hinting at the wonderful possibilities of the children of men. It is literally and scrupulously true. The divine Spirit is seeking and claiming human forms in which to manifest his truth and grace. And this mystic embodiment is to begin with his Church. The Church is to be to the living Christ what the human form of Jesus was 2000 years ago. The Church is to live Christ, to express Christ, to give Christ's Spirit visibility in human life and service. The Church is to be his body, and in the Church the world is to realize the presence of the Lord, to feel the power of his virtue and grace.

"There may be little or no room for him in the inn. But however incomplete is the embodiment it is nevertheless most real. The Church has her failings, she has her reluctances, she has her petty meannesses, she is often wayward and indolent, and she has many sins, but whosoever will look frankly into her life will find the Presence and the goings of the Son of God. He is embodied in countless fair and strong lives of character, and every virtuous feature is the shining of his face" (J. H. Jowett).

III. THE UNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Ephesians 4.4-6. "There is one body, and one Spirit, . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and

Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and all in all." There is no verb in the Greek. It all stands out, some one has suggested, as though Paul meant it for a formula to be repeated often by Christians for confirmation of faith, and for re-girding of wills.

"The unity of Christ's Church is a matter of faith, not of sight. What we see is disorganization, isolation, and even hostile tempers: what we must believe as yet to be fully realized is unity of both outward and inward life. 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints': it is far too much a neglected item of our Creed. Yet its reverent use, the mere repeated presentation to our minds of the truth that Christ's Body is One, would save us from many a missed opportunity, many a foolish partisanship and much mistaken loyalty and misdirected energy" (G. A. Johnston Ross).

Even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling. "The old Pagan world fell to pieces because it was 'without hope'; its golden age was in the past. No society can endure that lives upon its memories, or that contents itself with cherishing its privileges. Nothing holds men together like work and hope. This gives energy, purpose, progress to the fellowship of Christian believers. That God's will shall be done on earth as in heaven, is the hope of our calling. To this hope we 'were called' by the first summons of the gospel. 'Repent,' it cried, 'for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!' Now if it were merely a personal salvation that we had to seek, Christian communion might appear to be an optional thing, and the Church no more than a society for mutual personal benefit. But the hope of our calling is a hope for mankind. We labor for the regeneration of humanity. Seen in this larger light, Church membership is of the essence of our calling. As children of the household of faith, we are heirs to its duties with its possessions" (G. G. Findlay).

IV. THE GOAL OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Ephesians 4.11-16. These six verses form but one sentence in Paul's soaring description of the goal set before the Church. Some of the Ephesians, Paul wrote, were apostles; some prophets; some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers. They were given these gifts of leadership that they might use them in preparing others for service (in perfecting of the saints, the Christians), in ministering, and in the building up of the Church (the body of Christ). "Apostles were gifted for the perfecting of an authoritative system of doctrine. Prophets were gifted for the perfecting of the exposition of that doctrine. Evangelists were gifted for the perfecting of the number of the saints by the enunciation of the gospel. Pastors and teachers were gifted for the perfecting of the saints by feeding and training" (G. Campbell Morgan).

Their duties included Education (perfecting of the Saints), Social Service (ministering) and Evangelism (building up of the body of Christ).

"Are there none in your church with gifts as yet not fully dedicated to his service; men and women inspired to be the guides, friends, helpers, and, it may be, teachers of others, not yet aware of the gifts he has bestowed upon them? The fields are already white unto the harvest; but where are the reapers? There are men and women treading the lonely path of exile from God, exiled by their own indifference it may be, or through unbelief, waiting for some man or woman to lead them into the truth. Children needing to be taught; youths wanting companionship to share with them the great adventures of life; wrongs waiting to be set right; and, above all, hearts waiting to be won to God" (Ernest J. Barson).

Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Five months ago, in connection with our study of Paul at Ephesus, we had this verse and interpreted it as meaning, not that we are to become perfect men and women, but that, through the Christian view of God and the world which results from a personal knowledge of the Son of God, we are to strive toward the highest conception of what man may become, the conception which Christ himself has given us.

"Many years ago the Czar Nicholas determined to have the finest observatory in the world, and he instructed the famous Wilhelm Struve to see that it was built. When it was finished, Nicholas asked the director whether he was satisfied; to which the diplomatic astronomer replied that he was—for

the moment. The man of science realized that whatever is done in the investigation of the heavens is only tentative, and that new and grand instruments are soon requisite to search the secrets of the ever-expanding dome. How much more is it true that in our knowledge of Christ we can be satisfied only for the moment! Each day should bring us a clearer vision, a richer apprecation, a firmer hold of the truths of the gospel. The character of God ought to shine on us with a more golden light; the will of God, to be realized in new insight and sympathy; and the purpose of God, to acquire day by day fresh meaning and power" (W. L. Watkinson).

Paul would not have his readers like children who are easily led, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error, but firm and stable, speaking the truth in love, dealing truly.

"When the apostle adds 'in love' to his admonition to follow truth, he is not limiting the idea of truth-speaking; he is really extending it; he is defining what it means. It is here that all the mistakes of religious controversies are made. Men in the stress of the fight get so easily hard, and bitter, and revengeful, and censorious; and even when they are right, the bloom departs from the truth. Truth-speaking is a manner as well as a matter. It cannot be divorced from its spirit. Truth-speaking in the Christian sense cannot be done at all without love" (Hugh Black).

And growing up in all things unto him, who is the head, even Christ. In the "high-priestly prayer" which our Savior offered after partaking of the Last Supper with his disciples, he repeated over and over his earnest desire for the unity of his followers: "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are. . . . Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us. . . . And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one." Paul also eagerly desired the unity of Christians. He often referred in his letters to the evil of factions and divisions, and in his letter to the Ephesians he is very emphatic about the need of unity in the Church of Christ. Here he writes, as Moffatt translates his words:

"We are by our love to grow up wholly into him. For he, Christ, is the head and under him, as the entire Body is welded together and compacted by every joint with which it is supplied, the due activity of each part enables the Body to grow and build itself up in love." As the One Volume Commentary remarks, "Consistency of thought and language cannot express the full truth. Christ is the Head, He is also the whole organism. He is also the source of its unity, growth and energy."

Cities around the Sea of Galilee

"Alas, too many of us are out of joint! We are in the body of Christ, but like dislocated limbs, are useless; and before we can fulfil the great ministry which Jesus desires to fulfil by our means, we must be articulated—jointed with the living Head" (F. B. Meyer).

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Background of Mark 4.26-32

The parable of the Seed Growing Secretly is the only parable given by Mark alone. The parable of the Mustard Seed is given also in Matthew. They are among the parables spoken "by the sea."

The Background of Ephesians 1.22, 23 and 4.4-16

Paul wrote this letter during his imprisonment at Rome, it is generally believed. It is a long, carefully written letter, evidently having for its purpose the strengthening of the faith and the encouragement of the hopes of the Christians in Ephesus and probably in other near-by places.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

It is said that only fifteen per cent of Church-school pupils ever become church members. The ratio should be the other way: eighty-five per cent should become church members and church workers. Where lies the responsibility for the loss? In part with the Church-school teachers.

A prominent worker among young people records this incident. A boy of fourteen wanted to unite with the church with other boys in his class. His father, because of some early experience, harbored a deep resentment toward the church, and scoffed at the idea of his son's uniting with it. He told the boy that the average church member was insincere, a hypocrite, and cited examples. Then he added: "Now, if you want to join with such people, go ahead." The boy told his teacher that he had changed his mind about uniting with the church. His teacher asked him to come to his office at five o'clock and talk the matter over. Meeting there at his office that afternoon was a committee of the men's club of the church. The boy was introduced to these men. Every one of them seemed so cordial, so successful, to represent so fully everything that he admired, that he felt sure his father must be mistaken in some of his arguments against the church. When the committee had gone the teacher tactfully drew from the boy his reasons for changing his mind about coming into the church, then by his own representation of the matter completely won him. That was six years ago, and today it would be hard to find a more earnest, genuine, upright, active young Christian than he. It would have been a very easy matter for that teacher to accept the boy's statement that he had changed his mind about uniting with the church and to drop it there. But he had the right appreciation of his own part in this important matter.

A man of thirty, whom I know, joined the church when a boy. He is still a church member, but he never attends and "has no use for the church." The trouble began when he thought his services were not wanted in his Sunday-school class activities. Wherever the fault lay, the teacher who did not bother to find out why the young man left his class was faithless to his trust.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Beginning the Lesson

Begin with Explanations and Comments.

The Nature of the Christian Church

The Church is the organized, executive arm of the Kingdom of God. Just as artists, golfers and authors draw together, so do Christians. Any interest unshared is likely to sicken and die. Mountain climbers bind themselves each to each with a strong rope, so that if one slips the rest may hold him safe. In pressing upward toward God it is well for men to be thus bound together.

But the Church is an organization to do something. It is an executive body. The Church has given us Jesus Christ. It is the channel through which his memory and influence have been mediated to the world. All that we owe to Jesus we owe also to the Church. The Church has done more than anything else to preserve and enlarge humanity's sense of God. The Church contributes prayer. There are many who can pray nowhere except under its influence. The Church specializes in character. In this work it leads all other institutions and serves the world at the place where the world most needs serving.

The Church intends something. It intends to carry its own Christian spirit out into the world, through concentric circles, till the spirit of the best family life shall dominate every type of human relationship, and in school and shop, in art and politics and international affairs, there shall be no place where men try to profit at each other's expense, no place where the strong do not serve the weak.

Church membership focuses one's efforts. It furnishes the fulcrum for one's lever. One hundred men and women wishing well to the church from a distance are not worth one man or woman lifting its burden within it.

In becoming a church member one puts oneself in a position to be counted. If a cause is good, it is good for the cause to have a man do that. When Elijah lost all heart and fled whining to the wilderness, Jehovah reminded him that there were

yet seven thousand knees in Israel that had not bowed to Baal and mouths that had not kissed him. But one wonders what those seven thousand had been doing. They had not been bowing down. But neither had they been standing up to be counted on Jehovah's side.

But cannot one get the benefits of the church without being a member? Not quite so fully and intimately and not without measurably pauperizing oneself; but one can get many of them. Cannot one do for the church and through the church and for the cause of the church without being a member? Surely one can. Every minister recalls notable examples of such service. But if every one follow that course, what becomes of the church? What sort of conceit is it by which you allow yourself a course of action which if universal would ruin the most precious institution on the planet?—Condensed from an Article in The Congregationalist by James A. Richards.

The Function of the Christian Church

In verses eleven to thirteen of the fourth Chapter of Ephesians Paul describes the function of the Christian Church. It is to make perfect men and women; and to make them perfect after a particular type of manhood that is afforded by the life and character of Jesus of Nazareth.

All organizations exist for individuals, the individuals do not exist for the organization. The Church exists that it may make holy men and holy women; and, if it fails in this, nothing it can do, no creed to which it can subscribe, no ritual which it can utter, no cathedral which it can construct, no benevolences in which it can engage, count for anything. The development of individual character is the end of all organizations.

The work of the Christian Church is to make men and women who shall meet temptation as Christ met temptation in the wilderness; who shall carry the spirit of helpfulness into society as he carried the spirit of helpfulness into the wedding at Cana; who shall face opprobrium of right doing as he faced the howling mob at Nazareth; who shall dare vested interests when they are vested wrongs as he dared the Pharisees in the temple; who shall carry comfort and consolation into every home where sorrow has gone, as he carried them to the sorrow-stricken house in Bethany; who shall be able to say to the sinful and the outcast, God forgives you; who shall love and serve; who shall rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep; and who, when death comes, shall look through the grave to the land which lies beyond, shall see the angels where others see but the deed, and know that the living is not to be sought in the tomb.

As long as the Christian Church does this work, as long as it promotes this higher life in men and women, so long the world will need it, so long mankind will come for it.—Condensed from a Chapter in The Life that Really Is, by Lyman Abbott.

The Christian Church must Justify its Right to the Name

The Christian Church, which is the Body of Christ, justifies its right to its name by functioning Christ in the world. It functions Christ by continuing among men the activities which characterized Christ during his life on earth, and of these the primary and the more obvious were his wonderful works of mercy toward the sick and debilitated. A comfortable, wealthy congregation equipped with all that is necessary to beautiful forms of worship, to splendid ceremonial, to intellectual presentation of religious truth, in the heart of a slum-infested city, by whose miseries and sins it is undisturbed, is a congregation which must offer to the great Head of the Church a sad and disappointing spectacle, and which to the world must cruelly misrepresent him who demonstrated his claim to Messiahship by pointing to his day's work, "Go and tell what you have seen, the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised."—Ralph Connor, in The Friendly Four.

A Broad Conception of Church Work

The church is a group of men and women who associate in the love and service of Jesus Christ. At stated times the group meets for instruction and inspiration. But the members of the group are just as much church members when they leave the church building as when they enter. If we interpreted the term "church work" more broadly it would carry the religious spirit into the secular life. Church work should be the endeavor to apply the teaching of Jesus Christ to each duty and to each relationship.—Josiah Strong, in Studies in Social Christianity.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Why the Church? Why are not more people members of some church?

2. The Church is not a gallery for the exhibition of eminent Christians, but a school for the education of imperfect ones.—Henry Ward Beecher.

3. Why should young people identify themselves with the church?

4. Has an adult done his duty when his relationship to his church consists in attending it, whether regularly or occasionally, and in contributing towards its support, whether generously or meagerly? See Chapter VII of The Christian Life in the Modern World, by Francis Greenwood Peabody.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Read all the texts assigned for this lesson (at the head of our printed text) and also 1 Cor. 10.14-21. 2. How many sacraments did Jesus institute? 3. Was baptism a new rite? 4. What is the value of the rite of baptism for children? 5. By what other words is the Lord's Supper called, and what does each one mean? 6. What did Jesus mean by saying, "This is my body"; "This is my blood"? 7. What value does sharing in the Lord's Supper have for you?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

THE MEANING OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Beginning the Lesson

Grace Wong, a Chinese student who was visiting a college classmate, found the customs in an American home very different from the customs in the homes of the native Chinese Christians. With much hesitation, for she did not wish to seem to criticize her hostess, she said, "You will be so kind as to pardon me, but I am to wonder how you know that you belong to a church?"

Her friend replied that the family had always belonged to the church.

"But I am very much wanting to know how you are different. I cannot find what it is you do to be different. At home in China there are very many things. We do not smoke opium; we do not gamble. You play for prizes and would smoke rather than be thought queer; and you will forgive me, I cannot find what is the time when you read your Bibles together. I have not seen a Bible in the house except my own. My father has a car imported from Paris. He takes the whole street to the mission church. You have a car, and you have taken me, your guest, away from church this morning. It is not if I think it wrong, but I cannot see how it is different from not belonging. I am asking only how you know you member of church? What do you do to belong?"

These words of Grace Wong were condensed by May H. Barclay from an article in World Neighbors. "Suppose Grace Wong should visit our homes," Miss Barclay suggests. "Would she wonder how we know we belong to the church?" What answer would you make to that question?

What does church membership mean?

The Growth of the Church

The king came to earth in the person of the Infant Christ. He lived and taught and suffered, dying on the cross, despised and rejected of men. All hope seemed buried with him. But he arose from the dead, and sent the Comforter into the hearts of his disciples, who went forth to carry out his great commission of teaching the gospel to every creature.

The little grain of mustard seed sent forth its tender, almost invisible leaves and developed into twelve branches. The number of Christ's followers was five hundred; a short time afterwards three thousand were baptized, and then Christianity spread throughout Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome. It grew to be five hundred thousand in the first century, fifteen millions in the fifth. At the present time, of the sixteen hundred million people in the world more than five hundred million are counted Christians, and even those who are not themselves Christians acknowledge that in a Christian land there is greater safety and peace than elsewhere.

The Meaning of Church Membership

Joining the church means binding oneself to a group of persons who have publicly dedicated themselves to the service of Christ. To serve Christ means to cultivate in oneself the spirit of helpfulness and good will, and to try and spread this spirit

as widely as one can. In becoming a church member one says both to God and to men that he will aim at all times to follow Jesus Christ.

To follow Jesus Christ means to be reverent and humble, truthful and honest, generous and forgiving, always trying to help others to live the same sort of life. To be a worthy church member one must have the temper and disposition of Jesus, taking his attitude to God and to man, looking at life from his standpoint, hating the things which he hated, loving the things which he loved, and doing in co-operation with others the kind of things which he did.

A church member is a member of a family of which Christ is the head, and is bound to help his church brothers and sisters in all the ways which are open to him. The supreme law of the church as stated by Christ is: "Love one another even as I have loved you."

A church member is a soldier in an army whose leader is Christ, and every soldier is pledged to make war on injustice and cruelty, suspicion and hate, and every form of selfishness and wrong. A soldier's first duty is obedience.

A church member is an organ of a body of which Christ is the head. Only as each organ works harmoniously with all the other organs, both giving and receiving vitality, can either the organ or the body remain healthy and strong.

A church member is a worker linked up with a company of comrades called to a hard task, the work of extending the sway of Christ's ideas and the power of his spirit over the life of the whole town, over the conduct of the entire nation, and over the mind and heart of the wide world.

The kingdoms of the world are to become the Kingdom of God, and his Son, and every member of the church is committed to working with others for the winning of this great victory.—Charles E. Jefferson.

A Useless Church Member

"Yes," said Aunt Sarah, surveying her bandaged wrist, "the doctor says it's a bad sprain; and the minister says I know now how the church feels, in not having the use of all its members. The minister didn't mean that for just a joke, either; he looked at me as if he wanted to see how I'd take it. I had sense enough, too, to feel I deserved to have him say it to me. A word like that comes home pretty straight when one of your own members is useless, and worse.

"I've never thought just what being a member of the church meant before, though I've been one for thirty-five years. I've never felt obliged to do what the church wanted done. I felt it was a favor, my doing it at all, and half the time I let someone else do it instead. When I was through with work at home, and with what things I liked to do outside, then I was willing to do something in the church—if it was the kind of work that suited me. I guess I've been just about as useful a member to the church as the sprained hand is to me, all stiff and crippled, and refusing to bend more than an inch or two.

"There's lots of things I need to do, but I can't use this member to do them—that's certain. That's the way the minister has felt about me, I guess. I've been a useless member for thirty-five years, that's the long and short of it; and, if the rest of the members had been like me, the church would have been as paralyzed as old Cousin Josiah Jones, that can't move hand nor foot. I'm ashamed of myself—I truly am—and things are going to be different from now on"; and Aunt Sarah nodded her head with firm determination, as she looked at the church spire from her window.—Forward.

Sentence Sermons

To belong to a church is to make it easier to be good than to be bad.—George Hodges.

It is a great testimony to Jesus, the simple going to church in our own town or city or village.—John McNeill.

Join the church to assume your "full responsibility to God as the boy Jesus did when he joined the church."

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. When the people at Pentecost asked Peter what they must do to be saved, what was his answer? In whose name were they to be baptized? Unto what? 2. Give an account of the baptism of Jesus. 3. Why are Christians baptized? 4. What does the word *sacrament* mean? 5. What sacraments are observed in your church? 6. What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

LESSON X—MARCH 10

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

GOLDEN TEXT: This do in remembrance of me. 1 Corinthians 11.24

LESSON Matthew 3.13-17; 28.19, 20; Acts 2.38, 41; Romans 6.1-14; 1 Corinthians 11.23-29.
DEVOTIONAL READING Revelation 7.9-17

MATTHEW 28.19 Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: so teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

1 CORINTHIANS 11.23 For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Je'-sus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; 24 and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. 25 In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come. 27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. CHRIST'S COMMISSION TO BAPTIZE ALL THE NATIONS, Matthew 28.19, 20. Upon a mountain in Galilee after the resurrection of Jesus, the eleven disciples saw him and worshiped him. He told them of his universal dominion ("All authority hath been given me in heaven and on earth"), and gave them his world-wide commission to make his power a reality: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations."

"Remember, fellow Christians, how wide was the horizon of Jesus. Our horizon widens from cradle to home, school, city, country, and, with some, perhaps, to the last man. But to Jesus the outside rim of the earth was the first horizon that he saw, and the last. When he was born, good tidings came unto whom—the Jews? 'Unto all people'; 'among all nations'; 'throughout the whole world'; 'to every creature'; 'to the uttermost part of the earth'; are Christ's words. 'Go ye into all the world' is his limitless command, his boundless expectation" (Maltbie D. Babcock).

Jesus directed his followers to baptize disciples into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever he commanded them. "Baptism is (1) into the name of the Father, as our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor, who rules us, as free agents, by his love. It is (2) into the name of the Son: in baptism we assent, as Peter did, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,' and consent, as Thomas did, 'My Lord, and my God.' We give ourselves to be taught, and saved, and ruled, by Christ. It is (3) into the name of the Holy Spirit. We give ourselves to his guidance, as our Sanctifier, Teacher, Guide, and Comforter."

And then Jesus gave his wonderful words of comfort and encouragement and cheer: "Lo, I am with you always" (not will be, but *am*), "even unto the end of the world!"

Our responsibility for missionary work is patent in the command of Christ; our power for that work is perfect in this great promise of Christ.

II. PAUL'S ACCOUNT OF THE INSTITUTING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, 1 Corinthians 11.23-25. "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you," Paul wrote, and by this he referred to the spiritual meaning of the rite of the Lord's Supper as coming home to him when he pondered the words spoken by Christ to his followers; these followers reported them to Paul even as Paul had reported them to the churches he founded.

The Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he brake it. From the Greek word for thanks, *eucharistesas,* comes our word *Eucharist.* The bread was unleavened and had been especially pre-

pared for the passover feast which Jesus and his disciples had been eating. It was in the form of hard, flat, round cakes, which were always broken, never cut. Because Jesus broke off the pieces of bread, the sacrament is sometimes called The Breaking of Bread.

"This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me," said Jesus. *This represents my body,* is meant. The disciples clearly understood the metaphor. "The connection between Christ and us shall be of the closest kind; so close that the assimilation of the food we eat is not too strong a figure to express it. The food we eat becomes our blood and flesh; it becomes our life, our self. And it does so by our eating it, not by our talking of it, not by our looking at it and admiring its nutritive properties, but only by eating it. And whatever process can make Christ entirely ours, and help us to assimilate all that is in him, this process we are to use."

"Think how it would be, if some morning all the men, women and children in this city who mean well, from the reformer meaning to meet some giant evil at the peril of his life, to the school boy meaning to learn his day's lessons with all his strength, were to meet in a great host at the table of the Lord, and own themselves his children, and claim the strength of his bread and wine, and then go out with calm, strong, earnest faces to their work!" (Phillips Brooks).

Taking the cup, Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." Because Paul says in First Corinthians 10.16, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ?" The sacrament is called *Communion.*

"You say, What have I to do with baptism, communion? It ought to make you solemn when you remember how earnestly, how lovingly, in the very last moments of his precious life, your Lord commanded you to do what you have never done. It ought to stir your conscience when you see this world, which needs your Christian influence, robbed of it by your silence" (Phillips Brooks).

III. PAUL'S COMMENTS UPON THE RITE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, First Corinthians 11.26-29. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come," Paul told the Corinthians.

The Lord's Supper is a monument nineteen centuries old whose inscription, "In Memory of Jesus the Savior," is as legible as when first graven. By partaking of the Lord's Supper, his followers in a dramatic way proclaim the Lord's death. They eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of him. But what is it to remember Jesus? "To remember Jesus is to accept him as our Mediator, to trust him as our Redeemer, to love him as our Friend, to follow him as our Teacher, to obey him as our King, to take him for our all in all." Of all this the symbolic act is a pledge.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, 1 Cor. 11.25. It was accounted necessary to the validity of a covenant in ancient days that it should be sealed by the shedding of blood. The custom was universal. The heathen observed it, and so did Israel. And that we may understand the custom, we must consider what sacrifice originally signified. The blood was the life; and so its pouring forth before the altar was the offering up of the life to God. Properly it should have been the worshiper's own blood; and this was actually the primitive practice. A survival of it is seen in the story of the priests of Baal, who "cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them."

Such was the primitive rite, but in process of time it was softened, and the worshiper brought a victim and slew it and sprinkled its blood on the altar and on himself, signifying that thenceforth there was the bond of common life between himself and his deity, and thus they were in fellowship.

Such was the ritual of the Covenant of Blood; and our Lord employed that familiar institution in order to interpret the significance of his atoning Sacrifice.—Condensed from The Feast of the Covenant, by David Smith.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Background of Matthew 28.19, 20

Matthew closes his Gospel with an account of Christ's meeting his apostles by appointment in Galilee after the resurrection, and giving them their commission.

The Background of First Corinthians 11.23-29

This letter was written by Paul to the church which he had founded at Corinth. It was written some thirty years after Christ instituted the memorial rite of the Lord's Supper (as we call it) on the Thursday evening before the Crucifixion. Read the account in the Gospels.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

No explanation of the different methods followed by various denominations in administering the rite of baptism can be given here. A teacher in a Bible school of the Society of Friends should be able to explain why the rite is not observed in that denomination; a teacher in a Baptist school should know why immersion is practiced; teachers in the other Evangelical denominations should be ready to explain why immersion is not regarded as essential and the reason for the method practiced.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE PLACE OF BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Beginning the Lesson

When Jesus was about to give his great commission to his disciples he began by telling of the great commission which he himself had received from the Father. "All authority hath been given me in heaven and on earth," he said. Having all power, he gave his followers their orders. The duty of all Christians is to obey. "When Christ hath disciplined us, he hath not done with us; he enlists soldiers that he may train them up for his service." What did Jesus bid his followers do? Was baptism a new rite?

The History of the Rite of Baptism

The earliest use of the word *baptism* to describe a religious, and not merely a ceremonial, observance is in connection with the preaching of John the Baptist, and the title which was given him is probably an indication of the novelty of his procedure. He "preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin," i. e., the result of his preaching was to induce men to seek baptism as an outward sign and pledge of inward repentance on their part, and of their forgiveness on the part of God. It has been disputed whether the practice of baptizing proselytes on their reception into the Jewish community was already established in the first century; probably it was. But in any case the significance of their baptism was that of ceremonial cleansing; John emphasized it as a symbol and a seal of moral purification. But, according to the Gospel record, John recognized the incomplete and provisional character of the baptism administered by him: "I baptize you in water; but he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

Jesus himself accepted baptism at the hands of John. That Jesus himself baptized is nowhere suggested, but his disciples baptized, and it must have been with his authority, equivalent to baptism by himself, and involving admission to the society of the disciples.

Christian baptism, although it finds its formal analogy in the baptism of John, which in its turn represents a spiritualizing of ancient Jewish ideas of lustration, appears as in its essential character a new thing after the descent of the Holy Spirit. It has been customary to trace the institution of the practice to the words of Christ recorded in Mt. 28.19. The authority of Christ for the practice may be inferred from the prompt and universal adoption of it by the apostles and the infant Church, to which the opening chapters of Acts bear witness; and from the significance attached to the rite in the Epistles, and especially in those of Paul.

That baptism was the normal, and probably the indispensable, condition of being recognized as a member of the Christian community, appears from allusions in the Epistles (1 Cor. 12.13; Gal. 3.27), and abundantly from the evidence in Acts.—Condensed from Hastings' Dictionary.

The Place of Baptism in the Christian Life

The first act by which one makes it clear to the world that he is indeed a follower of Jesus is called "confession." The act by which Jesus wishes his disciples to confess that they are his, is baptism, and that is the reason why one who makes up his mind to follow Jesus is sooner or later baptized. When men in Jerusalem one day asked Peter what he wanted them to do, his reply was, "Repent ye and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." In saying this he was saying, "Turn to Jesus and confess him."—C. E. Jefferson.

Baptized into Christ

There is reason to suppose that at the very first, at Pentecost and for a little while after, the only name spoken at the baptism, either by minister or convert, was the name of Jesus Christ. We can well understand why it should be so. His personality was the one thing that had made religion real to these converts. This Jesus Christ, the Crucified, the Risen—this was their confession of faith. They were baptized therefore into his name, and the creed that sprang from their lips was, "I believe in him." But we know that the formula was soon enlarged to what we find prescribed in the closing verses of Matthew's Gospel, and what we still use at baptism in our churches—that is, "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." This, however, should not be taken as a new formula or creed, but only the old enlarged, the meaning coming out more clearly as men meditated on it longer.—William R. Richards, in The Apostles' Creed.

The Value of Baptism to Children

The value of the baptism to children as a part of their training in religion may be expressed in terms of life, or in terms of loyalty. When it is expressed in terms of life, the natural figure is that of the grafting of a branch into a tree; the life of the tree gives life to the branch; out of the tree into the branch flows vitality and strength. Thus baptism is a realization of our Lord's words, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Whether by act, the child being by baptism made a member of Christ, as the grafted twig is made a part of the stem; or by assertion, the eternal relation of the child to Christ being recognized and affirmed in baptism; the essential thing is the divine association accomplished or asserted. He is a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

This privilege involves, of course, no interior change. The change which is involved or declared is one of environment. The child is brought into the influences of the church. All the definitions of the rite are but synonyms of the statement that by baptism he is made a member of the church. That is what baptism is: it is the right of initiation into the church.

The moral values of the baptism of children may be stated in terms of loyalty. They may be reminded on occasion that they belong to the most ancient and important of societies, and they must keep themselves worthy of the privilege of membership. They must heed the old appeal of *noblesse oblige*. All the true pride of family, of country, of fellowship must be brought into application to the duties which are demanded by the church. There are ancient stories of martyrdom that not only men and women but even children were glad and eager to endure for the sake of Christ.—Condensed from The Training of Children in Religion, by George Hodges.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism is the divine seal, imposed in the name of Jesus Christ on each individual, a vocation addressed to the soul, a prophecy of unfoldings, offered or promised.

The Lord's Supper is the mystical pledge and the food of human unity in the name of the blood shed by the Savior for all mankind; it remains a never ceasing call to service and consecration.

Morally speaking, Baptism—the Sacrament of personality—signifies: "Thou art the child of God . . . become it!"

Morally speaking, the Holy Supper signifies: "Thou art the brother of Jesus Christ and of the brothers—behave accordingly!"

So the Sacrament of Regeneration and the Sacrament of Communion fundamentally unite all the disciples of our Savior and establish the catholic basis of a true Christendom.—A Declaration Presented to the Lausanne Conference by a Catholic and a Calvinist.

This is My Body

At the Holy Sacrament we see the bread and wine. The actual bread, however

substantial, is a vision, a figure: the literal wine, however real its presence in the cup, is, after all, the unreal thing. The real substance, the Divine, is what lies behind.

You remember the beautiful mediæval story of King Arthur and the quest of the Holy Grail. I am told by those who have studied the subject that the quest of the Holy Grail is just the mystery which every Christian seeks at the Holy Communion, and that is the endeavor to grasp the substance behind the figure. The man who sees only the bread and wine sees nothing.—A. T. Schofield, in Studies in the Highest Thought.

This Do in Remembrance of Me

This is the sole direction which our Lord gave regarding this great rite. Nothing could be simpler, nothing more human than his appointment of this sacrament. Lifting the material of the supper before him he bids his disciples make the simple act of eating and drinking his memorial. "You will not forget me," he says, "and this will recall me to your mind." As the friend who is setting out on a long absence or is passing forever from earth puts into our hands his portrait or something he has used or worn or prized, and is pleased to think that we shall treasure it for his sake, so did Christ on the eve of his death secure this one thing, that his disciples should have a memento by which to remember him. And as the dying gift of a friend becomes sacred to us even as his own person, and we cannot bear to see it handed about and remarked upon by those who have not the same loving reverence as ourselves; and as when we gaze at his portrait and recall the many happy times we spent together, and the bright and inspiring words which fell from those lips or wind up that watch he wound up for so many years, or handle the pencil-case worn smooth by his fingers; so does this sacrament seem sacred to us as Christ's own person, and by it grateful memories of all he was and did throng into the mind.—Marcus Dods, in Christ the Man.

The Spirit in which One Should Partake of the Lord's Supper

It is of great importance that one should come to this sacrament with both realization and aspiration; knowing in what spirit he should come in order to be blessed of God, and with all his heart desiring thus to come. The spirit is defined in an ancient question and answer. "What is required of those that come to the Lord's Supper? To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men."

Thus one is to examine himself. Do I repent me truly of my former sins? What are these sins in thought, in word, in deed, measured by the commandments, measured by the Beatitudes? What am I doing against the will of God? What am I leaving undone? Am I honestly desirous to be better? And as to my faith: do I remember the death of Christ with thanksgiving for his love and sacrifice for me? Am I loyal to him, as a soldier is loyal to his captain, or as a knight was loyal to his quest? And am I in charity with all? Is there anyone toward whom I have a heart of hatred? Am I honestly endeavoring, though under difficulty, to be forgiving? Am I making the place where I live more pleasant because I live there? Am I of use in the world, ministering to the needs of others?

Then self-examination rises into petition. In the spirit of penitence and aspiration, one approaches his heavenly Father:

O Almighty God, who dost put into our minds good desires and dost give us grace and strength to bring them to good effect; help me in my weakness and failure and penitence with thy mighty power; enable me now to begin again another and better life, wherein by thought and word and deed I may please thee; and fill my heart anew with love for thee and for all men; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.—George Hodges, in The Training of Children in Religion.

Who May Partake of the Lord's Supper

How many say, "I don't come to the sacrament; a man who has to knock about and make his way in the world must do things and put up with things of which, if one comes to the Sacrament, one is supposed to repent. And if I do not profess to be impossibly strict, at least I am not a hypocrite." So he goes off. "Lord, I thank thee that I am not one of these hypocrites: I make no religious professions, thank God." Now this is what I call the Pharisaism of the publican. Pharisaism is being satisfied with ourselves. And the Pharisaism of the man who makes no religious profession is at least as bad as the Pharisaism of the man who abounds in

them. Our Lord does not bid us abstain from coming to the altar if we are not fit, but he says, "See to it that you make yourselves fit; and that, too, in a hurry."—Charles Gore.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The value of forms in religion.
2. How the Communion Service helps the spiritual life.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Explain Mt. 12.7 and 8. 2. What argument of Jesus for a deed of mercy on the Sabbath is given only by Luke? (Lk. 13.10-17.) 3. What evidences are there that Sunday is becoming a day of recreation merely? 4. Should stores for the sale of confectionery, tobacco, magazines, delicatessen goods, etc., be open on Sunday? 5. Should moving-picture theaters be open on Sundays? 6. Should professional baseball, golf, tennis, games, etc., be permitted on Sundays? 7. Are Sunday newspapers desirable? 8. What do we go to church on Sunday for? 9. What do you consider the most flagrant misuse of Sunday in our community? What can be done about it?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM AND OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Beginning the Lesson

What does the word *sacrament* mean? That which is sacred. The word is not found in the Bible. It has its root meaning in the Latin word *sacramentum,* which means an oath of allegiance. Every observance of a sacrament of the church is a public avowal of one's allegiance to God and to his Son Jesus Christ. What sacraments has your church? Nearly all churches have the two sacraments, or ordinances, of baptism and of the Lord's Supper.

Why was the Herald of Christ called John the Baptist? Under what circumstances did he baptize Jesus? What did Jesus tell his followers to do, just as he was about to leave them after his resurrection?

The Meaning of Baptism

In some churches when a little child is baptized, the minister says: "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock; and do sign him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ Crucified and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier unto his life's end." These are the reasons why you should be baptized.

What a Little Girl Knew about Baptism

Rev. C. T. Brady, a missionary in the West, says that he once baptized a little girl in a small town on the border of Indian Territory. Her father was a cattle man, the owner of enormous herds. Each cattle-owner there has a brand of his own for marking his animals, and the mavericks, or young cattle born on the range, belong to the man who can get his branding iron on them first.

This little girl had to remain away from a session of the public school for her baptism. When she returned the children set upon her with hard questions, and inquired skeptically how she was in any way different from what she had been before. She told them that she had been made "a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven!" Still they gathered about her, and with the unconscious cruelty of children, baited her with puzzling queries. Finally, when she had exhausted all other means, she turned on them, her eyes flashing through their tears.

"Well," said she, "I will tell you. I was a little maverick before, and the man put Jesus' brand on my forehead. So when he sees me running wild on the prairie, he will know that I am his little girl."

That conveyed the idea. The children understood, and were respectfully hushed.

The Lord's Supper a Reminder of Jesus

I once knew a man who left a large sum of money in his will to have a magnificent monument built on which to keep his name in remembrance. Jesus wished to keep his name in remembrance. Jesus wished to be kept in remembrance in a very different way. When I am gone, he told his disciples that last night, I ask that you

meet together and eat a little bread and drink a little wine in remembrance of me. And the Lord's Supper reminds us of Jesus.

It reminds us of what he suffered. The broken bread speaks of a broken body. Jesus knew what heart suffering was—the denial, betrayal and desertion of his disciples brought suffering to his heart. He knew what mental suffering was—the struggle in Gethsemane proves that. And he knew what physical suffering was—he was scourged, the crown of thorns was driven upon his head, the nails into his hands and feet.

It reminds us of what he gave. The cup of wine stands for blood—the blood of Christ. And the blood is the life and the symbol of life. What did Jesus give us? Thoughts about God that help and inspire us: deeds that are models for us—examples of faith, obedience, love, of what a man can be and how life should be lived. He gave himself and his whole life to the world, and then he gave up his life for the world. He went *jusqu'au bout,* as the French phrase puts it, to the limit, he gave everything, he held nothing back. His enemies took his life, but he could have escaped had he so willed. A chaplain was speaking to a soldier on a cot in a hospital. "You have lost an arm in the great cause," said the chaplain. "No," said the soldier with a smile, "I didn't lose—I gave it." And in the same way Jesus did not lose his life, he gave it.

It reminds us of his purpose. His body was broken and his blood was shed for a purpose. Perhaps you have heard these words of a hymn—"He died to make us good, that we might be forgiven, and go at last to theaven." Jesus died to redeem us. In almost every church there are three letters displayed somewhere, usually upon the baptismal font, which will remind you of this at every service. They are I.H.S. Do you know what they stand for? Each one represents a Latin word, is the first letter of that Latin word: *I* is the first letter of the Latin word meaning *Jesus; H* the first letter of the word meaning *of man; S* the first letter of the word meaning *Savior.* The three together stand for "Jesus the Savior of Men."

"In memory of the Savior's love,
We keep the sacred feast,
Where every humble, contrite heart
Is made a welcome guest."

Why we Need a Reminder

"Sometimes I'm afraid I'm not a Christian at all," the boy said doggedly. "I thought I was when I joined the church, but I don't seem to have the same interest somehow. It isn't easy for me to remember God—to think about him a hundred times a day, as I feel sure a Christian ought to do."

"I am thinking about the time your father was away from home so long—on that business trip in the West." The minister spoke slowly, looking away toward the blue hills. "There was nearly a year you didn't see him, I think. Was it hard for you to remember him?"

"Not a bit." There was no uncertainty in the frank reply. "I don't suppose I thought of him as often as I do when he's in and out every few hours in the day—that is, after the first, when we all missed him so much. But we had letters every week, and of course we talked about him—mother and the girls, and all of us—and kept looking forward to the time when he'd come home. No, there wasn't much chance to forget him."

"Suppose there had been no letters, Harry? Suppose your father's name had been dropped in conversation? Suppose—"

"It would have made a difference," the other broke in eagerly. "The house would have been there, though, and the things father had given us. They'd have kept him in mind—for a time, at least. I don't know how it would have been after he had been away years and years."

"We can't see God," said the minister, after a thoughtful pause. "He is very near us, but until we have keener eyes than we have now, we must take that on trust. It isn't to be wondered at that we forget God when so many other things that we can see and touch and feel crowd in upon us. No doubt our Heavenly Father took all that into account when he gave us his holy word—something like your father's weekly letters—and his house, where the members of his family could meet and talk about him. I believe that's what the Bible and the church ought to mean to us, Harry."

"I didn't stay to communion the last time," the boy admitted, dropping his eyes. "I see what you mean, and it's right, too. We had two cousins visiting that day,

and they—well, they weren't at all that sort. I've missed a good many other Sundays, too; and this summer has been such a rush that my Bible reading has gone by pretty often. A fellow needs all the reminders of God he can have in a world like this."

"He certainly does, Harry," said the minister, smiling. "I fancy you're on the right track."—The Youth's Companion.

What the Lord's Supper Is

First of all it is a celebration, a memorial rite, "This do in remembrance of Me." We are accustomed to this thought of recalling a man or event to memory. The world has its anniversaries and centenaries, its memorial celebrations when we call to recollection things in the past which the world would be poorer to have missed and be poorer even to forget.

This Sacrament in this particular aspect is specially a memorial of Christ's death. It is a significant dramatic representation to our own hearts "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." The symbolic actions—the broken bread, the poured out wine—are specially designed for this end.

The next great thought is the simple thought of communion. It is no formal ceremony, this that we do in memory of Jesus. It is more than a memorial rite, more than a celebration, it is communion. It is not merely going back in memory to historical fact, but also it is personal appropriation of the real spiritual presence, accepting humbly for our soul's life the love of God in Christ. The Father's love is not only set before us as an object of history for admiration and example, but it is offered to us in this simple dramatic way. It is presented to us, to be taken by us and applied to our own sorrows and sins and needs.

It is further a great act of Thanksgiving which we offer. In all the accounts of the institution of the sacrament in the New Testament, there is a blessing or thanksgiving. The term *Eucharist* (thanksgiving) was the earliest name used by the Church, not merely because Christ gave thanks at the Last Supper, but because the Church felt that in the rite were symbolized all the benefits for which we ought to give thanks. It is the culmination of all the goodness and lovingkindness of the Lord. We thank God for his unspeakable Gift, the crowning Gift of his love. In neglecting the Sacrament we are cutting ourselves off from participating in what has ever been the great act of the Church's thanksgiving.

A further aspect of Communion is that it means renewed consecration; for in the very act we give ourselves once more to the Christian obedience and the Christian service. The word *Sacrament* implies this, taken as it was from a Latin word *"Sacramentum,"* which meant something sacred, and which afterwards was the word used for the oath of allegiance that the Roman soldier took. In partaking of Communion we are dedicating all we have and are to God. It means not only consecrating what we have but ourselves.

We cannot afford to lose the opportunity offered by this Sacrament for confessing our discipleship of Jesus, and for consecrating ourselves to the service of his kingdom on earth.—Condensed from Christ's Service of Love, by Hugh Black.

Sentence Sermons

He who feeds on Christ becomes Christlike.—Alexander Maclaren.

The Communion Service is more than a commemoration; more than a wistful memory; it is a personal fellowship with a living Savior.—David Smith.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Why do we keep the Sabbath differently from other days? 2. Two men of equal speed and endurance leave San Francisco together to walk across the continent. One of them will rest Sundays, and the other will not. Which one, do you think, will arrive first at New York? 3. What good deed did Jesus do on the Sabbath which is recorded immediately after our Golden Text? 4. What other deeds of mercy did Jesus do on the Sabbath? 5. Jesus attended the synagogue services on the Sabbath. Do you attend church services? 6. Jesus filled his Sabbath with deeds of mercy for others. Are your Sundays spent wholly selfishly? 7. By his deeds on the Sabbath what did Jesus show to be the right use of the day? 8. By his words, what did he say was the wrong use of the day?

LESSON XI—MARCH 17

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

GOLDEN TEXT: For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath. Matthew 12.8

LESSON Genesis 2.2, 3; Exodus 20.8-11; Matthew 12.1-14; 28.1-10; John 20.19; Acts 20.7; Romans 14.4-6; Revelation 1.10
DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 92.1-5, 12, 13

EXODUS 20.8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

MATTHEW 12.1 At that season Jesus went on the sabbath day through the grainfields; and his disciples were hungry and began to pluck ears and to eat. 2 But the Pharisees, when they saw it, said unto him, Behold thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath. 3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was hungry, and they that were with him; 4 how he entered into the house of God, and ate the show-bread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests? 5 Or have ye not read in the law, that on the sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless? 6 But I say unto you, that one greater than the temple is here. 7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath.

JOHN 20.19 When therefore it was evening, on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you.

REVELATION 1.10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. REVERENCE THE SABBATH, Exodus 20.8-11. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. The root meaning of the word rendered "hallowed" in verse 11, is *to separate:* the Sabbath day is to be separated from other days by the way it is spent. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work.

There are many persons whose difficulty in keeping this fourth commandment lies right here—they are too lazy to work the six days. The commandment lays stress upon working as well as upon rest. "Every man is as lazy as he dares to be," is an oft repeated saying which is not without some measure of truth. "Life without industry is sin," declares Ruskin. The tragedy of many a life is that time is not felt to be a trust for whose use he must render account. "'Tis the measure of a man—his apprehension of a day."

"You keep the sabbath in imitation of God's rest. Do, by all manner of means, and keep also the rest of the week in imitation of God's work" (Ruskin).

The seventh day is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work. The seventh day is to be distinguished from other days by the cessation of labor. "The Sabbath was made for man," Jesus declared. The needs of body, mind and spirit require one day of rest in seven. The reason given here in Exodus for the distinction to be made between the first six days and the seventh is that God himself labored at creation and rested the seventh day, wherefore God hallowed it, separated it from the other days for special holy uses.

"The setting apart of one day in seven for rest and worship was due, primarily, to the fact that the human machine will run six days with ease and regularity if it can rest on the seventh day, but it will creak and break if it is pushed on through every day alike. The duty of rest is quite as imperative as the necessity of work. The individual or the nation that disregards this law pays the penalty" (Amory H. Bradford).

II. THE SON OF MAN IS LORD OF THE SABBATH, Matthew 12.1-8. During harvest season in early summer, as Jesus and his disciples were crossing a grainfield (see Light from Oriental Life), the disciples plucked ears and ate the kernels of

wheat or barley. The Pharisees who saw them complained to Jesus that his disciples were doing what was not lawful to do upon the Sabbath. The Pharisees did not object to the plucking of the ears, for this was lawful according to Dt. 23.25, but to their doing it upon the Sabbath. See Light from Oriental Life. In answer Jesus recalled two examples from the Scriptures. The first was that of David, who when hungry ate the showbread which only priests could lawfully eat. Jesus referred to this, not as an instance of Sabbath-breaking, but as an instance of the setting aside of the law for a good and sufficient reason. The showbread was the twelve cakes made of fine flour which were placed every Sabbath on the table in the holy place of the tabernacle. In his flight from Saul, who was determined to kill him, David came to Nob, where the tabernacle was at that time, and there he induced the priest to let him and those with him appease their hunger by eating the showbread.

The other instance to which Jesus referred (Num. 28.9, 10) was that of the priests who, in offering the special sacrifices for the Sabbath, had to slay the animals and do other work, and yet they were guiltless. "But I say unto you, that one greater than the temple is here."

"The Sabbath is a means to an end: the end is man's true welfare, the attainment by man of his true destiny. He who is himself humanity arrived at its goal, has surely a right to say how the means may best be employed" (J. M. E. Ross).

"But if ye had known what this meaneth (with all their boasted knowledge of the law, they had been ignorant of its spirit), I desire mercy and not sacrifice (a quotation from Hosea 6.6), ye would not have condemned the guiltless. "Had you learned the simple truth, that God places the exercise of your moral qualities, particularly those of kindness, above merely external observance, you would not have committed this sin of taking up the position of wrong judges. Mercy stands here for the spirit of love, and sacrifice for the letter." "For the Son of man [Jesus' phrase for himself] is Lord of the Sabbath." "It is as if Jesus said: You have been condemning these men unjustly. They are entirely innocent. It is enough that I say so, for I am Lord of the Sabbath" (Thomas Hamilton).

"To Jesus the religious value of the Sabbath lies in the fact that it furnishes a medium for the expressing of love, God's love and man's. He who uses the day for acts of loving reverence toward God, and of loving service toward man, best preserves its religious character. To the Jews, the Institution was of supreme importance. With Jesus, the one thing of supreme importance is man. Hence in Jesus' view of religion mercy must take precedence over the Institution, no matter how sacred, how reinforced by law and tradition" (Ralph Connor).

III. THE SABBATH A DAY FOR REJOICING IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE SAVIOR, John 20.19. On the evening of the first Easter the disciples were met behind closed doors for fear of the Jews, when Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them, "Peace be unto you." The disciples believed and rejoiced. The Jewish Sabbath was Saturday, the seventh day of the week. After the resurrection of Christ on the first day of the week, Sunday, his followers observed that day as a sacred day until, as Alcuin, writing at the close of the eighth century, says, "The observance of the former Sabbath (Saturday) has been transferred very fittingly to the Lord's Day, by the custom and consent of the people."

"This is the day which Jehovah hath made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm).

IV. THE SABBATH A DAY FOR MEDITATION, Revelation 1.10. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," John wrote. He was meditating upon Christ and divine things; his mind was open and receptive for divine messages.

The only flag which can fly above the Stars and Stripes on our war ships is the flag of the Christian Cross—a white cross on a blue field—which is flown every Sunday morning at the hour of divine service. The national standard comes down, the flag of the Cross goes up the halyards, and the Stars and Stripes ascend to a place just beneath the emblem of worship. Is not this a picture of the relation of Sunday to the days of the week? The flag of the Christian Cross must not be dishonored on the days when the Stars and Stripes have first place: God must not be dishonored on the six days of the week which he has given us for work. But the seventh is a

special day when we may have more time to come closer to him, to mount in thought above our daily level.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Remember the Sabbath day, Ex. 20.8. As the sun set, the beginning of the Sabbath was announced by three blasts of a trumpet from the roof of the spacious synagogue of the town. The first blast warned the peasants in the far-stretching vineyards and gardens to cease their toil; the second was the signal for the townfolks to close their business for the week; and the third for all to kindle the holy Sabbath light which was to burn till the sacred day was past.—Cunningham Geikie, in The Life of Christ.

Announcing the Sabbath

Six days shalt thou labor, Ex. 20.9. The fourth commandment recalls the industrial life of the ancient world. Kings and princes are luxuriating in palaces for whose splendor we know no name more dazzling and brilliant than "Oriental." All other human beings are spurned as of lower caste. Of these the lowest is that of the laborer. Toil is unremunerated by wages and has no rights that are respected. War, not work, is deemed the legitimate and honored occupation of men. To labor is a dishonor and a curse. Out over the hordes of fighting and slaving masses rings the strange and wondrous charge: "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath, consecrated unto the Lord thy God."—Henry Berkowitz, in Old Pictures in New Frames.

Went through the grainfields, Mt. 12.1. Among the Jews the lands of different owners were not usually separated by fences, but only by stones set up at intervals as landmarks (Dt. 19.14); and the roads were not distinct from the fields, but ran through them, as southern plantation paths often do, so that the grain grew up to the edge of the path. The same thing is seen in Palestine today.—John A. Broadus, in Commentary on Matthew.

That which it is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath, Mt. 12.2. It was the boast that Jews were known over the world by their readiness to die rather than break the holy day. Every one had stories of grand fidelity to it. The Jewish sailor had refused, even when threatened with death, to touch the helm a moment after the sun had set on Friday, though a storm was raging; and had not thousands let themselves be butchered rather than touch a weapon in self-defence on the Sabbath? The new doctrine of Jesus would turn the world upside down, if not stopped.—Cunningham Geikie.

On any other day of the week it would have been considered lawful for one to pluck and eat ears of grain or bunches of grapes to satisfy hunger (Dt. 23.25), but to do so on the Sabbath was a breaking of two of the thirty-nine "primary rules" made by the rabbis in regard to the Sabbath, for to pluck ears of grain was called a kind of reaping and to rub them in the palms of the hands was a kind of threshing. "It was a saying current in the schools," says A. B. Bruce in The Kingdom of God, "that the rules for the observance of the weekly rest was a mountain suspended by a hair, the meaning being that the rules were very many, and their connection with Scripture very slight. Many of them were ridiculously minute; carrying the prohibition against work and bearing burdens the length of absurdity. A tailor might not go out with his needle near dusk on the Sabbath eve, lest he should forget he had it, and carry it out with him on the Sabbath day. For the same reason the scribe might not go out at that time with his pen behind his ear. A man might not wear on the Sabbath sandals weighted with nails. It was not agreed whether a cripple might on that day wear his wooden leg. A thing might be moved within a house from one end to the other, but only four ells in a public place. An endless series of rules conceived in this spirit was fitted to make the day of rest an insupportable horror." The yoke of the Pharisees was not easy.

In order to make the Sabbath laws more bearable, the rabbis had certain ways of

avoiding them, which were termed *Erubin,* "connections." For example, Edersheim tells us how narrow streets or blind alleys were connected by laying a beam over the entrance or extending a wire or rope along them, thus making them "a private dwelling," within which it was lawful to do what could not be done on the highway!

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Background of Exodus 20.8-11

The children of Israel under the leadership of Moses have escaped from their oppression in Egypt and are encamped before Mount Sinai, where the laws are promulgated which deal with one's duty to God and one another. These laws are called "The Decalogue," "The Words of the Covenant," "The Ten Commandments," "The Testimony." They are given in Exodus here in the twentieth chapter and also in the thirty-fourth chapter and again in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy. The first four commandments concern our duties to God; the last five concern our duties to our neighbors; the fifth commandment, regarded as a religious duty, as it was by the ancient Hebrews, may be classed with the first four: regarded as a moral duty, with the last five.

Mount Sinai, Where the Decalogue Was Given

The Background of Matthew 12.1-8

Six times, either directly or indirectly, Jesus was accused of Sabbath-breaking. The Sabbath controversy was one of great importance in the eyes of the Pharisees. During the Jewish exile in Babylon, when sacrifices could no longer be offered in the temple, the strict keeping of the Sabbath became a chief part of the Jewish worship, and legislation multiplied in regard to the observance required. After all the centuries during which it was held that the keeping of the Sabbath was a rite pleasing in itself to God without regard to its effect on man, came Jesus declaring that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. He would abolish the legislation of the Pharisees in regard to the Sabbath, and this would undermine their influence over the people. Wherefore they took counsel against him, how they might destroy him.

Mark says that after the curing of the man with the withered hand Jesus and his disciples "withdrew to the sea," hence we conclude that the place of the controversy with the Pharisees was somewhere in Galilee.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

At the beginning of the lesson period lead your pupils to voice their opinions as to what is right conduct and what wrong on Sunday, letting them express themselves freely. Do not settle the questions raised then, but do not fail to allow time for them at the close and then take a guiding part. After a discussion of the lesson and of the principles which Jesus gave in regard to the keeping of the Sabbath and of the deeds he wrought on the Sabbath, your pupils may have changed some of their views. Aim to have the hour result in clear conviction on the part of your pupils as to how the day may best be observed, and fixed determination to make the best possible use of the day.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS
THE LORD'S DAY IN MODERN LIFE

Beginning the Lesson

The Egyptians, Chaldeans, Peruvians, and others of the earliest nations as well as

the Jews, divided time into periods of seven days. The Greeks had a week of ten days, and the Romans a week of eight days, but each changed to the one of seven days. During the French Revolution one holiday in every ten was established as sufficient, but, after trying this plan for twelve years, the French gladly returned to a day of rest in every seven.

What is the Fourth Commandment? What day of the week was the Sabbath? Why was Sunday, instead of Saturday, observed as the rest day? "The Christian Sabbath in the sense of the fourth commandment," Jonathan Edwards observes, "is as much the seventh day as the Jewish Sabbath; because it is kept every seventh day as much as that; it is kept after six days of labor as well as that; it is the seventh, reckoning from the beginning of our first working day, as well as that was the seventh day from the beginning of their first working day."

What is the commandment in regard to the keeping of the Sabbath? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

The Day of Rest

In some of the coal-mining districts of England there is found a curious deposit which the miners call "Sunday stone." On examining a section of a piece, it is seen to consist of layers of stalagmitic matter regularly superimposed on each other, with this peculiarity, that after six strata of a blackish hue, there appears, with the utmost regularity, one stratum of pure white—then six more of black, with a seventh of white, and so on through the entire thickness of the deposit. The explanation of this remarkable formation is easy. Down in the coal-mine, water, filtering through the limestone roof, becomes highly impregnated with carbonate of lime. Dropping on the floor in a continual trickle, this forms a deposit. While the miners are at work, the coal dust which pervades the atmosphere, mingling with the dropping water, imparts a blackish hue to the deposit. But when the day of rest comes round, on which the mine is quiet, the water, having nothing to sully its purity, deposits the layer of beautifully white mineral.

We find recurring at its regular septenary intervals in the course of the world's affairs, this white-marked day. Six days the dust of the world's business darkens. That day is free from it, more or less. We are so familiar with it that it strikes us as nothing strange that over all Christendom, after every six days of toil, comes one of intermission, devoted to rest by common consent. From Labrador to the Coral Isles, from India in the East to the Rocky Mountains in the West, this Day of Rest is kept—kept by people of many different races: Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Teutonic, Slav; of many creeds: Protestant, Latin Church, Greek Church: and kept through age after age as far back as history carries us.—Thomas Hamilton, in The Day of Rest.

From "Influence of the Weekly Rest Day on Human Welfare"

It is as old as the human race and is based upon the necessities of human nature, therefore it comprehends all races and ages of mankind. As a periodical pause of labor it is conducive to the interests of morality. Its regular rest recruits the physical powers and prevents the strong temptations to stimulants. John Foster says that "The Sabbath is a remarkable appointment for raising the general tenor of moral existence. It also secures the opportunity for the cultivation of domestic intercourse—that powerful incentive to virtue. But more than that, the Sabbath is pre-eminently a day for instruction and worship—indispensable conditions of religious life."

The great service which the day of Sabbath rest renders man is in the realm of his spiritual nature. Man cannot live on bread alone. His physical nature develops best when his whole nature has its wants supplied. The peace of mind which accompanies true religion is a real physical asset. That faith in God which enables one when he has done his best, to lie down in quietness and to "rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him" not only affords blessedness of the highest order, but adds to his efficiency in every emergency that may arise.—From Influence of the Weekly Rest Day on Human Welfare.

The Religious Side of the Sunday Question

One need be no ascetic to see that the conversion of Sunday into simple pleasure-seeking, however innocent in itself, involves an immeasurable loss to all the better forces which go to making any civilization worthy of the name. Educated men and women, at least, might be expected to do thinking enough not needlessly to barter one of the greatest spiritual achievements of the human race for the sake of a little

Sunday amusement. Have we lost all sense of relative values? Is the Holiday Sunday a symptom of the decay of religious faith?

The spiritual employment of the first day of the week has been a great rock in the face of a driving materialism, behind which the weak, the weary and the other driven have long found shelter. Dare we let it go? May not the Holiday Sunday strike a blow, perhaps a fatal blow, at the heart of religion? That is what I fear. Do not misunderstand me. I do not wish to imply that because a man does not observe Sunday as I think it should be observed he is less a Christian than I am. But I do say that so closely is the observance of Sunday for worship related and interwoven, in all our traditions and in all our customs with religion itself, that we simply cannot as a people turn Sunday into a holiday and still hold fast to religion. Our religion will go, and there are thousands of men and women who if they would tell the truth, would reveal the havoc which has been wrought in their own moral and spiritual sanctuary because they have substituted recreation for worship on Sunday.

Sunday should be a day of worship. Certainly no man is spending the day wisely, nor is he doing his duty to himself or society, if he does not find some time in it for meeting with his fellows in praise and prayer.

Sunday should be a day of freedom and joy. It follows that play must come into Sunday as into the other days of the week, especially in the case of children whose life is expressed chiefly in play. To tell a child he must not play on Sunday is to tell it not to be a child for that day. The problem here is, to what extent may we seek amusement on Sunday so as not to jeopardize its essential character as a day of rest and moral and religious uplift?

Sunday should be a day for the home and family life. Froebel's beautiful injunction, "Come, and let us live with our children," is especially applicable to Sunday, and the leisure of the day offers opportunities for this fellowship.

Sunday should offer opportunities for meditation and the cultivation of the mind. No man can "live on twenty-four hours a day," as Mr. Arnold Bennett puts it, that is, really live, not merely vegetate, who does not devote some time to the serious side of life and the cultivation of his mind. The man who does not do this becomes a slave to routine and does not possess his soul. Sunday gives him this opportunity.—Condensed from an article in The New Outlook, by Charles Herbert Huestis.

As His Custom Was

Jesus came to Nazareth where he had been brought up, Luke tells us, and entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. "As his custom was": these four words that tell us so much about the way in which Jesus observed the Sabbath, need to be emphasized. Is his custom ours? "There is a discrepancy between our creed about the Sabbath day and our actual conduct," declares John McNeill. "In many families at ten o'clock on Sunday, attendance at church is still an open question. There is no open question on Monday morning about going to work on that day."

Why We Go to Church on the Sabbath

First of all, to worship our God, to offer him at an appointed time and place adoration, praise, thanks, confession, supplication, and love.

For public worship, a worship with others, that our fellowship in purpose and spirit, known to all by our presence, may run like a fire from soul to soul and from soul to God in worship.

That our presence for worship may add to place, song, prayer, word, to offering, liturgy and ceremonial, a conviction of the reality of the divine presence, that the child and the stranger to our God may see and believe. It is high service, yet the lowliest of us may give most in it, and no man may reckon its worth.

To give by our going to public worship Sabbath by Sabbath our testimony to all, that God is in his world and there is a time and place to worship him.

To give our thought to the needs and growth of the Kingdom, of our brother, of our own souls. We go because the day, the place, the fellowship in worship, the leadership in thought there, help our thinking to these ends far more than elsewhere.—Condensed from an article in The Congregationalist, by A. W. Burr.

Suggestions for Sunday Afternoons

Our cities contain many strangers. Lonesomeness presses upon young people who live in boarding houses or small apartments. The church members owe a duty to such strangers. To find weekday time is difficult. Sunday afternoon might well be

used far more than it is by Christian people as a favorable opportunity for enlarging the circle of neighborly friendship.

All our cities have many aged people, shut-ins, and invalids who sorely miss the touch of young life. In some places there are special homes for the aged. They would be more refreshed than any one imagines by music and visits from the young people. Could not "Good Cheer" groups be formed from our Sunday-school classes for this use of Sunday afternoon?—Austin Rice.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. No Sabbath, no worship; no worship, no religion; no religion, no morals; no morals, then—pandemonium.—Crawford Johnson.

2. He that brings much of the week with him into the Sabbath, will have the sure nemesis of taking little of the Sabbath back with him into the week.—C. B. Blenkin.

3. Was Dwight L. Moody right when he said that the number of church services attended ought to be measured by the person's ability to enjoy them and get good from them, without being wearied: the home, that center of such great influence over the life and the character of people, ought to be made the scene of true Sabbath observance?

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Of what is Paul speaking in our text from Second Corinthians? 2. Why did he wish the Gentile churches to make this collection? 3. Is the example of another a good argument to use for generosity in giving? 4. What counsel in regard to systematic giving does Paul give in 1 Cor. 16.2? 5. Is a tithe as generous a stewardship for a rich man as it is for a poor man? 6. Do you spend as much upon one party as you do upon missions? 7. Do you help support your church as much as you could and should?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

KEEPING THE LORD'S DAY

Beginning the Lesson

The Bulus of West Africa call the Ten Commandments "The Ten Tyings." Said a Bulu woman of the fourth commandment: "Pray with me that I may learn this tying. Others I can learn, but this about the Sabbath day will kill me." This and the second commandment are the longest ones, but of course you have had no trouble in learning them. What is the commandment about the sabbath? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath

In the bogs of Ireland there is found now and then a golden ornament that fell there centuries ago from the mantle of some Celtic chieftain. It has become green and disfigured, so coated over that its beauty and worth cannot be seen. When it is carefully cleaned the valuable gold and beauty of workmanship appear. The man who cleans it does so, not because he would destroy it, but because he values it so highly that he would restore it to its native beauty. With the act of such a man, an English writer compares the treatment of the Sabbath by Jesus. Jesus found the Sabbath so buried under many rules which men had made in regard to the way it should be kept that its true meaning and spirit had been hidden. He knew its beauty and value, and with firm but kindly hand removed these burdensome rules so that it might shine again in its own luster for the joy and blessing of the world.

He Honored the Lord's Day

In the Olympic Games at Paris, Eric Liddell won the four hundred meters' race, in "record time," and the press proclaimed him the king of sprinters. But there was more in the victory than just winning the race. When the young athlete, chosen to represent his country at the Olympic Games, found that his race was called to be run on Sunday he refused to compete, saying, "I object to Sunday sport in toto," and thus counted himself out.

The sporting press of Europe derided him; he was gibed at and criticized on all sides, even by the papers of his own country. But the stand taken by such a noted athlete had its effect, and the race was not run until later in the week. When young Liddell won, the public that had condemned him changed its opinion and gave him great applause.

On his return to Edinburgh he received triple honors—from the university, from the city fathers and from the Christian church. At a complimentary dinner given by the Edinburgh churchmen in his honor the menu card bore the following inscription: "Complimentary dinner in honor of Eric Henry Liddell, B. Sc., in admiration of his remarkable athletic achievements and his devotion to principle in that connection as a reverent upholder of the Christian Sabbath."

The Meeting Side

When the eight-day clock one morning struck the hour very slowly and faintly instead of in its usual vigorous fashion, it attracted the attention of its owner, who dropped his paper, looked up and listened. "I thought I wound it only two or three days ago," he remarked, "but it certainly sounds as if the striking part of it were pretty nearly run down."

Small Donald was interested, and, after the manner of his years, he watched and questioned curiously. Also he remembered. The next Sunday morning Uncle John was once more occupied with his reading—so comfortably and pleasantly occupied that he was reluctant to lay it aside, and made no movement to do so until his wife inquired whether he did not intend going to church.

"Oh, I—suppose so," he answered slowly and so hesitatingly that Donald eyed him wonderingly. "Why, that sound'sif the meeting side of you was pretty nearly run down, Uncle John!" he exclaimed. "Is it?"

Aunt Hannah laughed, Uncle John flushed and pushed the tempting magazine hastily aside. "Maybe, Donald, maybe," he admitted, "but if it is, we'll wind it up again and get a little stronger movement. Neither clocks nor people are of much use when the springs that ought to keep them going are neglected."—Forward.

Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep it Holy

Sunday is fast becoming a day of pleasure in this part of the world. Men and women, young men and young women, and even boys and girls, have begun to feel that the best way they can spend Sunday is to go off to some place like Coney Island, and have an exciting time. God gave the Sabbath day as a day of rest, and those who make it a day of pleasure find that they come home more tired than they were when they left their work on Saturday, and they have not received one beautiful thought. On Monday they are drowsy and irritable, and very much worse because of the way they spent the day before. Many of us fear that we are fast becoming a nation of people who have no respect for the Sabbath day at all.

The people of Holland used to call the Sabbath day, "God's Dike." The land of Holland is low-lying, and they knew what their great sea walls had done to keep the ocean from swallowing up their homes, and their children, and their cattle, and in the same way they saw that the ocean of lawlessness and worldliness would swallow them up, were it not for the great Sabbath wall that protected them. One time a man, who had no use for the church or religion, said that as long as the Christian Sabbath remains, the Christian religion could not be destroyed.—S. D. Chambers, in If I Were You.

Sentence Sermons

Book and church and day are given
For man, not God; for earth, not heaven.—Whittier.

Sunday is the soul's library and cathedral day.—Newell Dwight Hillis.

The Sabbath is not forced upon us as an irksome obligation, but granted to us as a precious boon.—F. W. Farrar.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What have the words *miser* and *miserable* in common? (Dictionary.) 2. What does it mean to be a steward? 3. What parable is Christ's lesson on stewardship? 4. By what parable did Jesus teach that giving to others is giving to God? (Mt. 25.31-46.) 5. What instance of generous giving did Jesus commend in a lesson of last year? (Lk. 21.1-4.) 6. Do you know how much money you give to good causes and how much you spend upon yourself? 7. Is the proportion right? 8. Of what besides money are you a steward?

LESSON XII—MARCH 24

STEWARDSHIP AND MISSIONS

GOLDEN TEXT: It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. 1 Corinthians 4.2

LESSON Genesis 12.1-3; Deuteronomy 8.17, 18; Jonah 3.1-10; Malachi 3.7-12; Matthew 28.18-20; Acts 1.6-8; 13.1-3; 26.12-20; Romans 1.14-16; 1 Corinthians 16.2; 2 Corinthians 8.1-15; 9.1-15
DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 96.1-8

ACTS 1.6 They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. 8 But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

2 CORINTHIANS 8.1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia; 2 how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3 For according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, *they gave* of their own accord, 4 beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints: 5 and *this*, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us through the will of God. 6 Insomuch that we exhorted Titus, that as he had made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this grace also. 7 But as ye abound in everything, *in* faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and *in* all earnestness, and *in* your love to us, *see* that ye abound in this grace also. 8 I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love. 9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. STEWARDSHIP IN REGARD TO MISSIONS, Acts 1.6-8. The apostles met Jesus on the Mount of Olives, and there they asked him if at that time he would restore the Kingdom to Israel. Their question shows how well-nigh impossible it still was for the apostles to rid themselves of the common Messianic expectation of the Jews that the Christ would rule over a Jewish nation independent of Rome and herself dominant, politically and religiously, over the other nations of the earth. "It needed the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit to teach the apostles that Christ's Kingdom is not of this world."

"It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority," was the answer of Jesus. "It implies that he will restore the Kingdom to Israel; not, however, to 'Israel after the flesh,' as the apostles imagined, but to 'the Israel of God,' i. e. to Christian believers of every nation, by making Christianity the dominant religion" (One Volume Commentary).

"O God, I pray thee for the childlike heart,
That can enjoy—all vexing things apart—
The beauties thou in heaven and earth doth show,
Nor fret myself with things I do not know" (Babcock).

And then Jesus promised power through the coming of the Holy Spirit, and gave his great commission: they were to be his witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Some one has called these four missionary zones parish missions, state missions, home missions, and foreign missions. The Acts records the story of how the apostles carried out the commission. "The uttermost part of the earth" is represented by Rome, the capital of the Empire, the place where, as Irenæus said, "All met from every quarter."

"This message always hurts me when I think of the vast tracts of earth that have never heard the name of Christ" (G. Campbell Morgan).

II. STEWARDSHIP OF SELF AND SUBSTANCE, 2 Corinthians 8.1-9. In writing to the Corinthians Paul cites the example of the Macedonians, who were moved by the grace, or the love, of God to their great liberality in making their collection for the poor of Jerusalem. See The Historical Background. Though the Macedonians were tried by troubles, their overflowing joy and even their great

poverty led them to spiritual riches, to great liberality. According to their ability, as he could testify, yes, and beyond their ability, they willingly gave. Perhaps Paul had thought in the first place that the Macedonians were themselves too poor to share in the collection, for he says they "besought him with much entreaty," considering it a grace, or favor, to be allowed to join the fellowship of those who contributed to the ministry of the Christian poor of Jerusalem. And contribute they did, beyond what Paul had hoped.

"Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more" (Wordsworth).

Then Paul explained to his readers how the Macedonians did it: they first of all gave their own selves to the Lord, consecrated themselves and their possessions to him, and to Paul, as God's agent in the matter. "What Paul says is virtually this: 'We expected little from people so poor, but by God's will they literally put themselves at the service of the Lord, in the first instance, and of us as his administrators. They said to us, to our amazement and joy, "We are Christ's, and yours after him, to command in this matter."' "

"Among the good things which Walt Whitman has written is this striking remark about giving: 'Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity; when I give, I give myself.' There are some things which even the poor prize more than money. The personal visit to some miserable little home, the kindly interest and sympathy expressed, may mean as much to the lonely sufferer as the accompanying gifts. It is easy to throw a crust or a quarter to a poor, starving waif to relieve one's conscience and to get rid of the sight and, if possible, the thought of human misery; but how much credit do we deserve for such a gift? It is the amount of self and of soul which we put into our giving that makes it valuable" (The New Outlook).

Paul now turns to his readers and directly impresses upon them their duty in the matter of this collection. He had urged Titus, who had begun the work among them, to carry it to completion. He praises them for their other virtues—their faith and testimony, their knowledge and earnestness, and for their love for him—and urges them to show also this virtue of liberality. He would not command, but would put to the test the sincerity of their love for him by comparing it with the earnestness of the Macedonians. Should they fail now in liberal giving, he would judge that their protestations of affection for Christ and for himself had been insincere.

"Far more than we know we are influenced by what other people do. One generous giver in a church is likely to make others generous. When we hear of good deeds which some one has done, we feel stimulated to do like deeds. Generosity in a neighbor makes us ashamed of our niggardliness. One church doing well in its missionary collections stirs up other churches to give largely. One liberal class in the Sunday-school makes all other classes desire to be liberal" (J. R. Miller).

Then Paul ended his argument for the liberality of his readers by citing the greatest possible example of love and self-sacrifice for others—that of Christ, who, though rich, became poor for their sakes that they through his poverty might become rich. "The rich Christ is the pre-existent One, in the form of God, in the glory which he had with the Father before the world was; he became poor when he became man," says Professor James Denney. "The poor men are those whose lot Christ came to share, and in consequence of that self-impoverishment of his they become heirs of a Kingdom." Another interpretation is that the word *rich* is used metaphorically: though Christ was rich in spiritual gifts, yet for our sakes he became poor in worldly goods that we through his poverty might become spiritually rich.

"The greatest of all givers gave himself for us; and until our giving reaches the point of sacrifice, until some of our very life goes out with our giving, let us not flatter ourselves that we are even weak imitators of that great Example."

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Their deep poverty, 8.2. The Romans had been very hard on these Macedonians;

they had taken possession of the gold and silver mines which were rich sources of revenue, and had taxed the right of smelting copper and iron; they had also reserved to themselves the importation of salt and the felling of timber for building ships. The Macedonians said that their nation was like a lacerated and disjointed animal. On the top of this had come persecution in the case of the Christian converts. God had enabled these impoverished people to do great things for their fellow-Christians; no doubt with the grace of God, the Corinthians would do the like.—Alfred Plummer.

The riches of their liberality, 8.2. This is the testimony Aristides bore to the charity of the Christian in the time of Hadrian (117-138): "He who has, gives to him who has not without grudging; and when they see the stranger they bring him to their dwelling and rejoice over him as a true brother; for they do not call brothers those who are after the flesh, but those who are in the Spirit and in God; but when one of the poor passes away from the world, and any of them sees him, then he provides for his burial according to his ability, and if they hear that any of their number is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs, and if it is possible that he may be delivered, they deliver him. And if there is among them a man that is poor or needy, and they have not an abundance of necessaries, they fast two or three days that they may provide the needy with their necessary food."

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Background of Acts 1.6-8

After his resurrection, Jesus and the apostles were together for the last time on the Mount of Olives over against Bethany (Lk. 24.50) where he parted from them. Our text gives his last words before he disappeared from their sight.

The Background of 2 Corinthians 8.1-9

The maintenance of its own poor had been the care of each particular church that Paul had founded, but for the poor of the church at Jerusalem Paul had collections made among the Gentile churches. He did this, not merely for the relief of the Jerusalem Jews, but to unite Gentiles and Jews—between whom there was danger of jealousy and dissensions,—through the giving of common sympathy and the sharing of mutual help. "The stern, hoary race-limits were quite submerged in the voluminous sentiment of philanthropy born of a common faith in the redeeming Christ." In taking up the matter of the collection in his letter to the Corinthians, he spurs them on to liberality by telling them how liberal the poor churches in Macedonia had been.

Buddhist Monks in Burma Collecting Alms

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Mrs. Ballington Booth has told how as a child she used to play with a toy Noah's ark. She and her brothers and sisters arranged the sound animals and marched them safely into the ark, but all animals with broken legs, all headless birds, etc., were laid aside. After time had been allowed for the deluge, they built an altar and offered as sacrifice these maimed animals that were useless in their play. Children sometimes think of giving in much this same way. Their outgrown and cast-off garments may be handed over to the Salvation Army or put into the missionary box; their broken toys may be given to the washerwoman's children; but the worth-while things they keep for themselves.

If yours is a class of Intermediates or Seniors, ascertain how many of them keep a cash account. You may discover that they have no idea how much they are spending for this or that pleasure, and how little for Christian giving. Urge them to keep such an account, and to set aside a definite proportion of the money at their disposal for the work of the church, for home and foreign missions, for individual benevolences. Lead them to give thoughtfully, conscientiously, gladly, and generously.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

STEWARDSHIP OF SELF, SUBSTANCE AND SERVICE

Beginning the Lesson

Dr. Thomas Brainerd was once trying to raise money in his church in Philadelphia for a good cause but was making little progress. He addressed his people in these words:

"Brethren, the Lord has denied to you the privilege of exercising many of the most precious graces of the Christian character, which, in his infinite mercy, he has vouchsafed to the rest of us. You never knew what it was to repose absolute, unassisted faith in God for the things of this world. You never had to go to sleep at night without knowing where your breakfast was to come from. You never had a sick child wasting away for the want of costly luxuries. You never had to deny yourself the gratification of the impulses of pity, when a sufferer came to your door. You never had to endure the humiliation of being dunned for an honest debt, without knowing whether you could ever pay it. All these unspeakable advantages in developing Christian character an inscrutable Providence has taken from you, and bestowed upon us poor men. The one solitary grace of the Christian life which has been denied to us and given to you, is the grace of liberality, and if you don't exercise that, the Lord have mercy on your souls!"

We have today Paul's words on the grace of liberality, and his thought and Dr. Brainerd's seem to have been similar.

Follow with Explanations and Comments upon the text from Second Corinthians.

Stewardship of Self

Money is but a fraction of whose expenditure we are stewards. Peter had the right thought when he said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I unto thee," as he used his power with God to restore strength to the cripple's limbs. Paul followed his Lord's thoughts when he wrote, "Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love that prompts me to give myself, it profiteth me nothing." "I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God," Paul said in his address to the elders of Ephesus who had met him at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem for the last time. Self-giving is much harder and nobler and more blessed than money-giving.

Emily Huntington Miller, in The Woman's Missionary Friend, gives the thoughts of a cultured, prosperous woman on reading the Pharisee's proud boast, "I give tithes of all I possess."

"I do give tithes of all I possess," she thought. "It's much the easiest way to keep the peace between your conscience and so many conflicting claims. When I've laid aside my tenth I feel perfectly comfortable over the rest of the dollar."

"Tithes of all I possess,"—the words haunted her. "I never thought before how much that really meant, and what a very small part of all my possessions the money was. It would mean a tithe of my time, and my thought, and my ingenuity, and my ability to make things go—and I've always said I will give, but I will not be on committees and take responsibility and get other people to work. I've paid my dues, but I would not take time to go to the missionary meetings. I've subscribed for the paper, but I never had any interest in reading it. I can't honestly say as much as the Pharisee did.

" 'All that I possess,' that would mean love, human love, that crowns me and makes me blessed among women. I'm sure I never gave that. I never in my life ever gave any real love to these women whose lives are so empty of it. I haven't taken time to love them; I have just let them be crowded out of my thought. I don't know just what good love could have done them, but it might have done me good; made me more grateful, more generous, more eager to help, and that would have reached to them. 'All that I possess' would mean opportunity, and influence with others; it would mean the beauty and rest and delight of my home;—but how could I tithe that except with those who can be brought in to share it? Yes, I might; I might spare that lovely etching on which I have set my heart for the library, and send the money toward the Madras Memorial Home. It would mean sharing the church for reading-rooms and evening-classes and social help; sharing leisure and culture, and pleasures and knowledge; it would mean sharing oneself, and that is the hardest of all."

She sighed and took up her needle, but it moved slowly now, and in place of the haunting words, a gentle, persuasive voice seemed to whisper, "Freely ye have received, freely give." "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." The tears began to fall, and in the quiet, beautiful room David's prayer of thanksgiving ascended again: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

Life a Trust

Life, with all its values, comes to us as a sacred trust. Not ownership, in the pagan view, nor receivership, nor proprietorship, nor partnership, as covering these values, but stewardship or trusteeship, is the Christian way of living.

Not a pious privilege merely, nor a form of economic insurance solely, nor a financial plan to help the churches chiefly, but a fundamental law of life as old as humanity under which God designs to trust us as far and as fast as he can, a law that gives essential distinction between pagan and Christian, and that lifts us into the fellowship and family of God—this is Christian stewardship under which we are to hold all values in trust.

Such trusteeship implies human dignity and responsibility; it implies accountability; it implies democracy; and it implies universal distribution of obligation. Failure to accept and properly evaluate such trusteeship accounts for most troubles of persons, peoples, and nations.

As applying the law, stewardship should be taken to cover all property, persons, things, and income as related to life—to one's time as the most precious gift from God; to one's talents for the uses of God; to one's influence to extend the kingdom of God; to one's family as related to the work and ministry of God; and to one's money and possessions as material wealth for God.

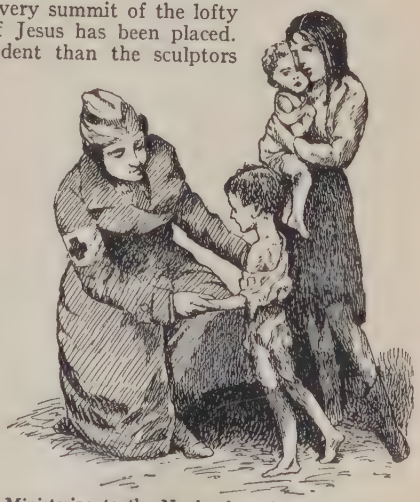
Applying this stewardship law would solve the essential problems: of the nations, eventuating in worldwide brotherhood and universal peace; of the family, in shaping the character, careers, and destiny of children; of the church, in providing money and leadership for all kingdom projects and tasks.

Paul declared, "A stewardship has been entrusted unto me." So he recognized the sacredness of the trust of life. And not elsewhere lie personal progress, kingdom advancement, and Christian civilization.—Manfred C. Wright, in Zion's Herald.

Stewardship of Service

On a pinnacle in South America, at the very summit of the lofty range of mountains, an immense statue of Jesus has been placed. There is a deeper significance in the incident than the sculptors themselves saw. For Christ is always on the hilltops pointing his Church to the immensities beyond. The Church has always inclined toward parochialism; she has contented herself with those few miles that lie between herself and the distant foothills. But the Master has stood ever on the sunlit summit pointing to the infinities beyond.

"Go," said the Master. "Go ye into all the world." In that tremendous "Go," the Church has caught the glimpse of the other side of the hill and has been saved from narrowness by the discovery. —Frank W. Boreham.



Ministering to the Needy through the Red Cross
From a painting by J. Paul Verrees

The Stewardship of Substance

Once in an isolated settlement of the old world of slow communications, a man could hear of cruel need in the antipodes and go home with nothing but sympathy to offer. Let no man in this modern world express sympathy with any need elsewhere on earth unless he means it! The acid test can straightway be applied. For we can do something, no matter where the need may be. The agencies of human helpfulness now reach in an encompassing network over all the earth. The avenues are open down which our pennies, our dollars and our millions can walk together in

an accumulating multitude to the succor of all mankind. Each of us can take some of his own nerve and sinew reduced in wages to the form of money, and through money, which is a naturalized citizen of all lands and which speaks all languages, can be at work wherever the sun shines. It is a privilege which no one knew before our modern age. It is one of the miracles of science, mastered by the spirit of service, that a man busy at his daily tasks at home can yet be preaching the gospel in Alaska, feeding the hungry in India, healing the sick in Korea, teaching in the schools of Persia, and building a new civilization at the headwaters of the Nile. Consider, then, the shame of one who in such an era is still an inhabitant of an age gone by! Only a man who with generous, systematic stewardship is taking advantage of the new opportunities is fully abreast of his times.—Harry Emerson Fosdick, in The Meaning of Service.

A Rich Woman's Convictions

To be well born and rich is enviable. But birth and breeding and all these blessings, I believe, should make one feel a tremendous obligation to the world. The woman of leisure owes much more to her country than the woman who must earn a living or who must sew and wash and mend for her children. The women who are blessed with money and leisure should be much more than society women. Let them realize their responsibility in this world of distress and suffering. I have the good fortune to have money. In the last few years I have been saving all that I can in order to build some model houses in Plymouth. This is not because I believe it will solve the problem of bad housing. I do it with the hope that it may induce the public authorities and others to try and remedy the terrible slums of England. I don't consider that I am being philanthropic or bountiful. I am merely doing a little to warrant my control of this money.—Lady Astor.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The Christian life and the making and use of money. See Chapters IV and V of the Christian Life in the Modern World, by Francis Greenwood Peabody.

2. Are the great charities the greatest charities?

3. Stewardship for all of life. See book with this title by Luther E. Lovejoy.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is the lesson common to the three parables of the Ten Virgins, The Talents, and The Last Judgment? 2. When one of the disciples asked Jesus, "Are there few that are saved?" what did he reply? 3. Read all the texts assigned for today. 4. Why should the Christian have no fear of death? 5. What is the right way to prepare for the future life? 6. What do you think the strongest argument for our immortality? 7. What is your answer to Emerson's question, What is the use of eternal life to a man who cannot use one half hour of this life well?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

WHAT IT IS TO BE A CHRISTIAN STEWARD

Beginning the Lesson

"Make all you can," cried John Wesley in one of his outdoor sermons. "Amen!" exclaimed a thrifty man. "In the second place," said Wesley, "save all you can." Again the man cried enthusiastically, "Amen!" "And in the third place I say," continued Wesley, "give all you can. Give all you can to every worthy cause." "There now," wailed the disappointed man, "he's gone and spoilt it all!"

That man had not learned in his youth to be a cheerful giver. He knew nothing about the happiness of giving. In our text from Second Corinthians Paul tells about some cheerful givers: who were they? What does Paul say about them? (Continue with the Explanations and Comments upon this Text.)

What it is to be a Christian Steward

Our word *steward* comes from the old Anglo-Saxon word *stigweard,* which meant *styward,* or the warden of a sty, the man who looked after the pigs. The word later outgrew this limited meaning and became more useful when it was given to "a person intrusted with the management of estates, or affairs not his own." To intrust a man with what does not belong to him, puts upon him both an honor and a responsibility. Now what is a Christian steward? Is it not one whose possessions and powers are intrusted to him for use in Christian service?

The last command of Jesus we call the "Great Commission," and by this we mean that he committed a great duty to the care of his followers. What was the command? It has been well called also the "Great Permission," for the work of making Christian followers of others is the great privilege of true Christians. Coupled with the Great Commission is a great Promise: what is it? "The good news of Jesus is, to those who know it, their best possession: the object of Missions is to make it the world's possession." What share have you in this great work? What did Dr. Robert E. Speer mean when he said that Christianity is a possession which we lose except as we part with it?

A Lesson from The Missionary Intelligencer: Does it Apply to You?

GOD	CHRISTIANS
SO LOVED	SO LOVE
THE WORLD	THE WORLD
THAT HE GAVE	THAT THEY GIVE
HIS ONLY	ABOUT 32 CENTS
BEGOTTEN SON	PER YEAR
FOR ITS REDEMPTION	FOR ITS EVANGELIZATION

When John Wanamaker Learned the Joy of Giving

John Wanamaker was a boy of sixteen working in his father's small brickyard in Philadelphia. He attended the church on Broad Street near the City Hall of which Dr. John Chambers was the pastor, and heard him more than once call attention from the pulpit to the long-neglected brick pavement around the church. When at last the pastor pathetically described his grief over the shameful neglect, the heart of the young man in a rear pew was stirred.

"I'll see whether I can get it done," he resolved. It took only a few days of soliciting among the wealthy brickmakers to secure enough material, and by his own generous contribution with that of others he paid for laying it. Before the next Sunday the firm, new pavement made the church and all its surroundings look remarkably improved.

John went early that Sunday and hid behind a projecting corner to see how Dr. Chambers would view his work. With his head bowed, thinking of his morning message, the grand old man did not see the pavement until he actually stepped upon it. Then he excitedly stepped hard, as if to assure himself that it was real; he walked half way to the corner and back over it and then stood with a beaming face and inspected it the entire length. Unconsciously John had fallen into step behind the preacher. Dr. Chambers suddenly turned, and seeing John behind him, shouted: "You had something to do with this, my boy! Thank you! Thank you, with all my heart!"

When Mr. Wanamaker, years afterward, told the story he added: "It was my first taste in giving to the Lord's cause. I had never known anything so satisfying and inspiring. Do you wonder that I kept on giving more and more as I became able to do so?"

The Harm to Self of Not Giving

Experience and observation show that it is a dangerous thing not to give constantly and generously. Those who have been withholding their gifts or diminishing them have grown critical, unhappy and self-centered. They themselves have been the greatest sufferers by their withholding.

As certainly as the stream which does not flow on and out becomes stagnant and a public peril, so the life which hoards and holds becomes a source of unpleasantness to others and to itself. Selfishness tends rapidly to narrowness, unhappiness and meanness.—The Tabernacle Tidings of Minneapolis.

A Scrub-Woman's Stewardship

One bleak Christmas Eve a Yale student, spending his vacation in settlement work in the lower end of New York City, found a German widow in the cheerless attic of a tenement, with three little daughters down with typhoid fever, without fuel, or food, or medical attention. He got fuel and made a fire, brought food and a doctor. One of the children died, but the other two recovered. The woman came to the Neighborhood House, then to the church, then to Christ. Hearing of the famine in India, she made up her mind to show her gratitude by taking up the support of one or more of the Indian famine waifs in memory of the little child she had lost.

She was at this time earning her living and supporting her family by scrubbing floors in a great office building in the neighborhood. Out of her hard-earned wages she began setting aside a dollar and a half a week, and found that she was able thus to take care of four famine waifs. She also began to interest herself in those about her in the neighborhood who were in poorer circumstances than she was.

By the following Christmas Eve she had moved from her attic tenement into new rooms, which she had papered with her own hands, and had put in a baby organ, on which the children were learning to play. She had gathered together a group of poor children for a Christmas party, and her fellow-scrubwomen had joined in providing for the treat. Out of the new-born love for her Savior she soon had learned the great lesson of Christian living. Out of the fountain the stream was flowing forth.—David McConaughy, in Money the Acid Test.

The Old Pensioner's Stewardship

The minister of an English village sat in his vestry receiving gifts of thanksgiving from the members of his church and congregation. The fund was mounting steadily when one of the most prosperous men of the community—a wealthy merchant—entered the vestry. After shaking hands the merchant drew his check book somewhat ostentatiously from his pocket and proceeded to write a check for fifty pounds. The minister just glimpsed the figure as he was turning to speak to a newcomer, an old-age pensioner, wrinkled and bent with fourscore years of hard toil. The minister greeted him cordially. Laboriously the old man fumbled in his waistcoat pocket and coin by coin put ten shillings down on the table.

"I really ought not to take this from you, my dear friend," said the minister. "You cannot afford it."

"But you must!" replied the old man in excited, quavering tones. "You must, sir; I've been saving this up all the year, and I don't want to give to God what cost me nothing."

So the minister accepted the old man's gift and wrote a receipt for him. When he had finished he glanced round for his wealthy friend. But the man had vanished. The minister wondered whether the attention that he had given to the old pensioner had offended the merchant prince. He took an affectionate farewell of his aged friend and in his heart thanked God for such noble self-sacrifice.

Later that afternoon his wealthy visitor of the morning burst into the vestry. He shook hands with the minister and placed a check face downwards upon the table. "Did you see the amount of the check that I wrote this morning?" he asked.

"Why, yes," replied the minister; "I could not help seeing that it was for fifty pounds."

"And you remember that old pensioner's gift?" the man continued.

"I do indeed," said the minister.

"Well, look at this," and the man turned the check face upwards; it was for two hundred and fifty pounds. "I felt ashamed of myself beside that brave old boy," said the merchant. "All the afternoon I've been fighting my love of money, and at last I, too, have decided that I must not give God what costs me nothing."

Later that day the minister sought out his old pensioner friend and said to him, "John, do you know how much you gave to our fund today?"

"Yes, sir," replied the old fellow, "ten shillings." "Not a bit of it," replied the minister; "your gift amounted exactly to two hundred pounds plus ten shillings," and he told him the story.—The Youth's Companion.

Sentence Sermons

We shall do so much in the years to come,
But what have we done today?
We shall give our gold in a princely sum,
But what did we give today?—Nixon Waterman.

Where there is little love for giving, there is little likeness to God.—E. E. Hallam.

"To have is to owe, not to own."

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Commit to memory our text from the Gospel of John. 2. To whom did Jesus say, "I am the resurrection and the life"? (Jn. 11.25.) 3. What does Paul say in 1 Cor. 15.17 that the resurrection of Christ proves? 4. What does Jesus tell us about the life after this one?

LESSON XIII—MARCH 31

THE FUTURE LIFE (EASTER LESSON)

GOLDEN TEXT: Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life. Revelation 2.10

LESSON Matthew 25.31-46; Mark 12.26, 27; Luke 24.1-12; John 14.1-6; 1 Corinthians 15.3-20, 50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18; Revelation 22.1-5.
DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 23.1-6

LUKE 24.1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

JOHN 14.1 Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. 4 And whither I go, ye know the way. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way? 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, Lk. 24.1, 2. Early on Sunday morning after the crucifixion of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and other women came to the tomb where his body had been laid, to embalm it with the spices they had prepared. All the way they had been worrying about the great stone that blocked the entrance to the tomb. They could not move it, and who would be there to move it for them! But when they came within sight of the tomb, lo, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. Christ had risen. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" were the words they heard. Was it true? Jesus was not there, but where was he? They were full of fear and full of joy, half fearing and half believing. And then they met him. There he was, the same Jesus, and their fear and doubt vanished. He was risen, even as he said.

We no longer fear what lies beyond the grave. We know that we do not really die, that we pass through death to another life. We know that we shall live again, and in that knowledge we lose our fear and find hope and joy.

"May Easter Day
To thine heart say,
'Christ died and rose for thee.'

"May Easter night
On thine heart write
'O Christ, I live to thee.' "

II. THE PROMISE OF CHRIST, John 14.1-3. See The Historical Background. "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me." In spite of everything the disciples must trust in the goodness of God and in their Lord's own loving thought of them. Faith is still the cure for heart-trouble, the sure reliance in anxious moments. Not a nominal faith in the existence of God, but an active, overmastering belief in his goodness and wisdom and in his overruling all things for good, is the faith that will keep the heart from despair in times of danger and dread.

" 'Twas the Master himself who said it
To the sorrowful little band,
Facing an hour of darkness
That they could not understand."

Separation was at hand, but there would be a reunion. By going away Jesus would make ready for his followers' abiding places in his Father's house. "In my Father's house are many mansions." Our word *mansion* meant originally a place of shelter, and the margin of the Revised Version has the translation "abiding places." "If it were not so, I would have told you." All peoples have a belief in a future life. This belief, Jesus' words tell us, is true, for otherwise he would have disillusioned the minds of his followers.

"In adding that if hopes for the future were baseless, he would have told them, Jesus seems to guarantee the deep instincts of human nature as

correct interpreters of God's mind toward man's, as well as to confirm any hope which his own words may raise" (George Reith).

"I go to prepare a place for him."

"I wonder many times that ever a child of God should have a sad heart, considering what God is preparing for him" (Mark Rutherford).

As there is no uncertainty about his going, so there is none about his coming: "I come again, and will receive you unto myself." "The promise is fulfilled in the death of Christ, and it has changed the aspect of death. The personal second coming of Christ is not a frequent theme in the Gospel" (Expositor's Greek Testament). "'I come again' refers not so much to his coming at the end of the world, or in great crises of history, or at the death of believers, as to the progressive influence of the Holy Spirit in his church, preparing the way for the final and completed union of Christ and his people which he predicts in the succeeding part of the verse—'and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also'!" (New Century Bible).

III. CHRIST THE WAY, John 14.4-6. The disciples at last grasped the truth that their Lord was to leave them, and a sense of the magnitude of their loss overwhelmed them. When Jesus said, "And whither I go, ye know the way," Thomas, the practical, required full knowledge: "Lord," he said, "we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?"

"That is our human difficulty. We don't see the end of the way, therefore we don't know the way. But God's plan is to lead us step by step, not to flash light ahead clear to the end of the way" (Robert E. Speer).

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life," Jesus replied. Moffatt's translation reads, "I am the real and living way." Note that Jesus does not mean that he is first the way, then the truth, and then the life. The words *truth* and *life* explain in what sense he is the *way;* he is the way to God because he is the truth about God and he is the life from God. "'I am the way.' It was the very word that the disciples wanted, for they felt like wanderers that night. Do you know what it is to lose the road? There was a helplessness like that on the disciples when Jesus announced that he was soon to leave them. So far, they had all walked with Jesus. Now, at the cross, that pathway seemed to cease. We can hardly grasp the depth of comfort in it, when they heard that Jesus was to be the Way for ever more. It was in him they were to fight and conquer. It was in him they were to live and die" (F. B. Meyer).

"Heaven often seems distant and unknown, but if he who made the road thither is our Guide, we need not fear to lose the way. We do not want to see far ahead—only far enough to discern him and trace his footsteps" (Henry van Dyke).

"I am the truth," said Jesus. There is much in other religions that is true and helpful. Where is the claim of the Christian revelation to supremacy? Dr. Watkinson answers: "I tell you, Jesus Christ never came into this world to teach men truths: Jesus came into this world to *reveal the truth.* In outside systems you have bits of truth, half truths, splinters of truth; in Jesus Christ you have the fulness of truth, that redeems and perfects and satisfies the human spirit."

"I am the life." "Life is back of everything. Do you know what life is? No; neither does anybody. Life is indefinable; life is God. Life is measured by the number of things you are alive to. I must have a life that is more abundant than my poor nature. I must have the power of Jesus and have inside fellowship with him" (M. D. Babcock).

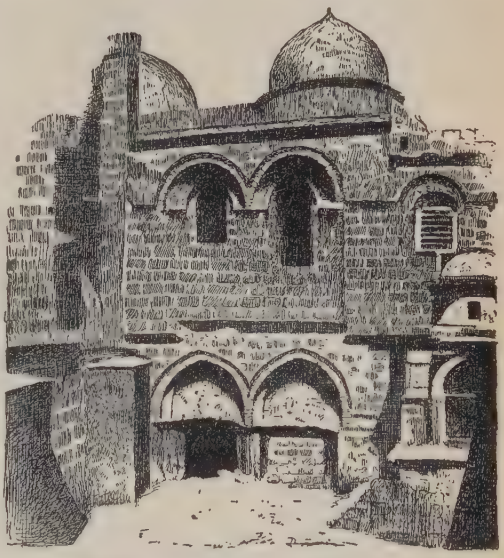
"Without the way there is no going; without the truth there is no knowing; without the life there is no living: I am the Way which thou shouldest pursue; the Truth which thou shouldest believe; the Life which thou shouldest hope for" (Thomas à Kempis).

"The record of no miracle could bear such testimony to his deity as the words which are recorded in this fourteenth chapter of John. Jesus claims to be one with God, to be worthy of trust as God, to be the sole Revealer of God, to be an abiding, personal Presence, inseparable from the Spirit of God" (Charles R. Erdman).

Whatever the knowledge or skill or lack thereof men may have, however good or evil they may be, all are equal as regards their common need of the Savior to lead them to God. We sometimes say that all roads lead to Rome, that is, that one can attain his goal by various ways. But to the highest goal, the Father, but one way leads—Jesus.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

I am the way, Jn. 14.6. The highest reason is at once stimulated and satisfied when the divine Teacher likens himself unto the sun, the vine, the life, the truth. But since no object is more homely than the road over which pass the weary multitudes, with herds and flocks and caravans, it stirs our sense of wonder that Christ should have likened himself unto the way that leads into some imperial city. Yet the events of that far-off Roman era lent to the road a world-wide significance, and made "the way" one of the richest of Christ's symbols. At best it was a rude, wild age. Society was chaotic and unorganized. For reasons of safety men dwelt in walled towns and cities. There were brigands in the mountains and wolves in the villages, and the caravans made haste to find safety within the walls of some town. In such an age Julius Cæsar conceived the idea of binding all the provinces together by a system of roads. And with these ways and roads uniting the towns and cities, leveling the valleys and making the mountains low, peace followed tumult and danger gave way to security. Soon the road came to stand for security, peace and permanency. By reason of the associations with law, government, justice, it may be doubted whether any other term could have carried more meaning to men than the expression, "I am the Way."—Newell Dwight Hillis.



The Entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Background of Luke 24.1, 2

Luke has recorded the arrest, trial, crucifixion and entombment of Christ. He tells us that "the women who had come with him out of Galilee, followed after and beheld the tomb, and how his body was laid. They returned and prepared spices and ointments. And on the sabbath they rested according to the commandment." Then on the next day, the first day of the week, they went back to the tomb with the spices which they had prepared and learned that the tomb was empty; Christ had arisen.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre covers the traditional site of the crucifixion and the entombment. "Gordon's Calvary," outside the wall of Jerusalem on the north, is a knoll which most scholars today accept as the site of the crucifixion. Not far away is the "Garden Tomb" which is very like the one in which Jesus was laid.

The Background of John 14.1-6

Jesus and his disciples are in the Upper Room at Jerusalem, where they have celebrated the Last Supper. Before Jesus loomed the shadow of the cross, and though he himself sorely needed comfort, he thought only of comforting his faithful disciples. It was then that he uttered the beautiful words which have been the comfort and hope of Christians from that day to this.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

"Whither I go, ye know the way," said Jesus.

"Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how can we know the way?" said Thomas.

Was Jesus right? Was Thomas right? Or were they both right? The fact is that Thomas and all his fellows knew, after a fashion, but they did not know that they knew. They had heard much in the past as to where Christ was going. Plainly enough it had been rung in their ears over and over again; it had made some kind of lodgment in their heads, and, in that sense, they did know. It is this unused and unconscious knowledge of theirs to which Christ appeals, and which he tries to draw out into consciousness when he says, "You know whither I am going, and you know the road." Is not that exactly what a patient teacher will do with some flustered child when he says to it: "Take time! You know well enough if you will only think"?—Alexander Maclaren.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

OUR GROUND OF HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Beginning the Lesson

When Livingstone asked the natives of Central Africa what became of their noble river, they replied, "It is lost in the sands." "We know another wonderful river," comments Dr. W. L. Watkinson, "the river of human life which rushes through these streets, spreads far and wide, and flows on through ages. What becomes of this river of life? Says Skepticism sadly, 'The clergyman, the undertaker, and the sexton see the last of it in the sands.' But we can never be content with such a solution, which is no solution. The Lord Jesus alone enables us to give a bright interpretation to the dark problem. He has brought life and immortality to life. Beyond the sands of time we behold gleams of the great, bright ocean of eternity, and through the mist comes the music of many waters. Our Lord was manifest in the flesh, he died, was buried, and rose again that he might deliver all men who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

The Easter Assurance

The special significance of the Easter festival lies in its triumphant assertion of the fact of immortality. Not the impersonal, unconscious merging of the individual in impassive immensity which Buddhism teaches; not the mere prolongation of physical and sensual life which the Koran promises; but the true immortality of the spirit, that nobler part of man which distinguishes him infallibly from the rest of creation.

A hope, a trust, a confidence, even, in the future life is common to all races of men. It is inherent in the savage; it is symbolized by all the phenomena of nature; the loftiest and purest minds of all ages have been able to reason to no other conclusion. It is no reproach, therefore, that our Easter Day has been identified with the Jewish Passover, or among Western nations with the old pagan festival of returning spring and resurrected life. The Church, recognizing the identity of aspiration in heathen and Christian, bringing to the former assurance that his dream of immortality was not a delusion, but a God-proven reality, naturally enough took and made sacred the time with which such associations were already interwoven. Christ came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law. His Church needs not to reject all pre-existing human institutions, but to fill them with a new and holier life, to invest them with a higher and truer significance.

Origen, an early father of the Church, says finely that the Christian who dwells, as he ought, on the love and sacrifice of Christ, keeps every day his Easter and his pentecostal feast. But there is virtue, too, in coming together and publicly declaring to a heedless and preoccupied world the faith which is at the foundation of all religious life. That is why Easter, which proclaims the divine, the immortal in man, is the greatest festival of the Christian Church.—Youth's Companion.

The Implications of "If it Were not so I would Have Told You"

Are there any words of Jesus more comforting and beautiful than these, which seem to assure us that the universal longings of the human heart in regard to the life to come are permitted because they are to be realized—that there will be the recognition of friends, the continuance of fellowship formed here, and special opportunities for service?

The belief in immortality is as extended as the world and as old as the centuries. Cato the Younger said:

"It must be so, Plato, thou reasonest well:
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality?
Or whence this secret dread and inward horror
Of falling into nought?
'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us
And intimates eternity to man!"

If it were not so, Christ would have told us. "Every other being in creation finds somewhere an environment adapted to its needs. Desire in nature is the forerunner and prophecy of satisfaction. Each migratory instinct needs a climate to match it at last. So even our sense of limitation and insufficiency is a promise of some better thing. Our shame and horror of evil are a promise of robes to be one day washed white. Why is man's heart fashioned so that he knows himself to be a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth, encamped here but not domesticated, like autumn swallows when they take wing for summer beyond the sea? Things like these must needs carry with them a great and precious promise. In our Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, he would have told us."

The Argument from Incompleteness

Man has affections. They are an inextricable part of his life. They are as worthy of attention as are his thoughts. Love is as reliable as reason. The heart has reasons which the reason cannot understand. Now it is impossible for love at its strongest to believe that death ends all.

A man has a mind, and his mind is too large for this world. There is no scope for the employment or satisfaction of all his powers. He is too great to be crowded within the narrow limits of seventy paltry years. We have in us latent powers for whose development we find here no opportunity. Our life at its best is fragmentary and unsatisfactory. As Emerson says, "God does not build magnificently for mice." Nor can we believe that God would build the human mind for the fleeting day of earthly life.

A man is never able to do in this world what he wants to do. We all lay down our work before it is half completed. If we are intended to grow into the image of God we must have another life in which to do it; we can make only the beginnings here. Before we have chiseled out the statue, the chisel falls from our hand. We are made upon too great a scale for such a world as this, and there is deep down in us a quenchless desire for a fuller expression of our powers.

The world is incomplete. Everything is unfinished here. None of the processes are worked out. The world is inexplicable without another world. What inequalities! What wrongs! What abominations! What injustice! How many wicked men who are not punished! How many good men are not sufficiently rewarded! Right is on the scaffold, wrong is on the throne, and there is no explanation for this world unless within the shadow there is a world in which wrong shall be righted and justice be done. This world is unendurable unless there is another.—Condensed from Things Fundamental, by Charles E. Jefferson.

The Argument from Science

One of the most stupendous discoveries of the nineteenth century is the discovery of the fact that matter cannot be destroyed. You can change its form, but not its weight. You may alter its shape but not its substance. It cannot be washed away or burned up or blotted out. Nor is it possible, says science, to destroy energy. Force may be transformed, but not obliterated. Science has added to her creed the doctrine of the conservation of energy. If it be true, then, that force cannot be destroyed, we are allowed to hope that that peculiar form of force known as personality will survive the experience of death. If what we call the natural forces of the world cannot be annihilated, why should we not expect that affections and aspirations and the power of thinking should be equally indestructible?

Science has also familiarized us with the fact that progress is only possible by the constant adaptation of faculty to environment. Without light there would be no eye. Without sound vibrations there would be no ear. Without water there would be no fire. Without air there would be no wing. Whenever we find a faculty we discover in the environment something to which that faculty responds. There

is always a correspondence between the internal life and the external reality. This is true throughout the entire animal creation up to man. In man we find things which do not exist in animals below his rank. There is in him the thought of immortality, and the craving for it, and the expanding conviction of it. The question now arises, Is there any external reality to which this internal hope corresponds?

Science has persuaded us all to believe in progress. It is her constant contention that through the ages there runs an unfolding purpose. She has pointed out the fact that everything passes from lower to higher. And having gotten us into this forward-looking habit, it is well nigh impossible for us to bound our vision with the tomb. With the apostle we cry out, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust,
Thou madest man, he knows not why;
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him, thou art just."
—Condensed from Things Fundamental, by C. E. Jefferson.

Argument from the Belief in Jesus

If we believe in Jesus Christ, we cannot doubt that the day of the soul is not concluded here under the sun. This is not because of the abundance of his teaching upon the subject. It is always a fresh surprise to run over the three Synoptists and see how Jesus was content to leave the subject of the future life almost completely in the shadow. He centered men's thoughts upon the infinite importance of the present hour—its duties, its rewards, its heavenly and eternal significance. He left the great hope shining clear, to light up every footstep of the way. None should ever pluck them out of their Father's hand. But of material for speculation or day-dreaming as to another existence he left them next to nothing. He who believes in Jesus will rest in the quiet assurance of a life byond the grave—not so much because of what Jesus taught, nor even because of the historical weight of evidence for his resurrection, but because of the whole weight and significance of his personality. We need, as almost never before, the steadying assurance of an infinite value and reach to human life, in which the resources of eternal love and righteousness shall have a chance to work out to completion what this brief chaotic strife of right with wrong can never bring to pass. Eternity was the scale on which Jesus worked out his earthly plan; and nothing but a like confidence in eternity gives one room to think after him his thought.

But whether or not we need the stimulus and comfort of such a hope, it is obvious that he who believes in Jesus will find this sublime anticipation blossoming in his heart. It is impossible to trust in him and in the worth of his spiritual insight, and yet suppose for a moment that he lived in a world of spiritual unrealities, and gave his life at last for an illusion. He was as sure that the grave was not the end of life for men, as he was that he himself was returning to his Father. He was never haunted by the fear that either Pharisee or Roman could put an end to his fellowship with the Father, by the simple expedient of crushing the life out of his body. And with an equal clearness he saw that his brethren also belonged to a household that is not of this earth only. So that for us who believe in Jesus, his convictions are manifestly decisive.—Condensed from an Article in The Biblical World, by Henry Kingman.

They "Really Believed it"

A little more than a month before Easter she had returned from the burial place outside the great city, leaving there in the silence her fourteen-year-old boy. Two days later her little girl gave up the fight and in less than a week, her baby. Only the little three-year-old escaped. It was diphtheria. When Easter came she was at church with her husband and the child. Her face was pale but tender and beautiful. She wore no emblems of her sorrow, and the lilies and violets on her coat were like those she had worn every Easter since I had known her. When the great congregation rose to sing, she sang softly the words:

"The powers of death have done their worst,
But Christ their legions hath dispersed."

Her husband stood with his head bowed. He could not sing. But she touched his hand as it lay on the back of the pew, and when they recited the Creed I heard

him saying the words steadily, "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting."

She taught her class of girls that day and he went to his superintendent's desk, led his school in worship and read the Easter story with only a break now and then in his fine voice. Amidst the faces lined with suffering, rebellion and despair, of the Easter congregation, they had seemed a miracle. "How can they?" men and women said to each other as they left the church. A fifteen-year-old boy walking home with his father from Sunday-school said, "Dad, I guess Mr. and Mrs. L—— really believe it, don't they?" "Believe what?" said the father. "The whole big thing, all of it, Easter, you know."—From an article in The Congregationalist, by Margaret Slattery.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. If a man die, shall he live again? See If a Man Die, by J. D. Jones; The Life Everlasting, by John Fiske; Chapter IX of a Working Theology, by Alexander MacColl; The Other Room, by Lyman Abbott; Chapters IV and IX of Immortality; Chapters V to VIII of What and Where Is God, by Richard LaRue Swain.

2. Does true religion ever require us to believe anything which it is more reasonable to disbelieve than to believe?

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. In what year did Uzziah die? 2. Why did Uzziah's death seem a great calamity to Isaiah? 3. What is the meaning of the actions of the seraphim, verse 2? 4. Why did Isaiah utter his exclamation of verse 5? 5. What is the meaning of the placing of the live coal upon Isaiah's lips? 6. What was the result of the vision? 7. Mention several Bible Characters who were especially commissioned for a great work. 8. How do you respond to God's calls upon you? 9. What was the meaning of Isaiah's act in 20.2? 10. What do we learn in regard to the prophetic message from our third selection?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

LIVING HERE AND HEREAFTER

Beginning the Lesson

The night before his men were to "go over the top" in the Great War, Donald Hankey inspirited them with these words: "Now remember, boys, tomorrow we are going over the top, and if you are wounded it's 'Blighty' (home), and if you are killed it's the resurrection!" So the apostle Paul encouraged himself and others with the words: "For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

When the earthly house of Jesus' tabernacle was about to be dissolved, on the night of his betrayal and arrest, he comforted his disciples by telling them of the heavenly home which was to be his and theirs. What were his words?

The New Home

Journeying the other day from Boston to Denver, I noticed in the car two boys. They were talking together: and I heard one of them ask the other, "Where are you going?" "Oh,—out West!" was the answer. And I was sure that the boy had no idea where "out West" was: whether it was a large place or a small place, or how he was going to get to it.

But he evidently wasn't troubling himself about it! And I didn't wonder, when I heard him tell the rest of the story. His father had been "out West," wherever that was, and had been making there a new home for the family. And now he had gone back to Massachusetts, where they had been living, and was taking the family with him to the new home "out West." There he sat, in the next seat to the boy, with his family about him. He looked as though he could take good care of them all. So the boy had nothing to fear or to worry about. He was just giving himself up to the pleasures of the journey: leaving his father to attend to all the business of it. He was wise, wasn't he? And how perfectly foolish he would have been to fret and fear just because he didn't even know where "out West" was, much less how to get there. His father knew; that was enough. His father had already prepared the new home, and now he was bringing them all to be with him there.

We sometimes wonder where the new home will be. People often ask, "Where is heaven?" Nobody can tell us. I suppose that is because God's universe is so very great, and we know so little: just as the little fellow did not know where "out West" was because it is so big, and he was only a little boy. But we need not be a bit troubled, if we do not know. Jesus knows. The boy's father was eager to have all his family with him in the new home. It wouldn't be home without them! So he was sure to make just the best home for them he could: and there was no danger that he would forget to go for them.

Heaven is God's home. And it is to be our home, too, if we love him. He is not satisfied to live without his children. He wants them with him. So he will surely come for us when we are ready for the new home. And we need not fear to go. He will carry us all the way.—Condensed from Little Ten Minutes, by Frank T. Bayley.

Start Now to Live in Heaven

In every life, however rich may be its sunshine, there are cloudy days. Some people experience just one trouble after another. As a matter of fact, were it not for the clouds of life, our hearts would grow much harder than they do; just as the earth becomes hard after perpetual sunshine. It frequently happens that a home in which Jesus had been forgotten, is stricken by sickness or death. Then the hearts that had grown thoughtless are once more turned toward God. Among families that serve the Lord and remember him in worship, the ties which bind our lives on earth to heaven grow stronger when a loved one passes on to the mansions above.

It would not be wholesome for us to think of heaven so much that we forget how to live in the world; but most of us are not much in danger of that. We are so wrapped up in the excitements and the worries of the world that we give scarcely a thought to heaven. It is well to consider at times what way we are going; for the time comes when we can no longer decide that. Our preparation is here and now.

It was Jesus' own way of comforting his loved ones to point them to the mansions above. He reminds the troubled heart that life is not all there is to it. The trials we meet by the way are as nothing in comparison to the glory that awaits us yonder.

The best way of all is to start right now to live in heaven. We can do it in just one way: by letting Jesus have complete control over our lives. Shall we not tell him that we are willing to please him every moment? Let us ask him to do with us exactly what seems wise to him, in order that we may become better workers for him each day and more perfectly prepared to meet him.—Gerrit Verkuyl, in Scripture Memory Work.

Our Life Here Determines the Life Hereafter

"For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done whether it be good or bad," said Paul. What is our Golden Text? Life Here, you see, is the preparation for Life Hereafter. You recall the words of one of Christ's parables: "Before him shall be gathered all the nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left."

The Persians have a saying that the soul on leaving the body has to cross the Bridge of Eternity. On that bridge the soul meets a specter, either of surpassing beauty or of revolting ugliness. "Who art thou?" the soul asks, and the specter answers, "I am thy life."

We do not know how soon our life here will be ended. We do not know what the life beyond will be like. We do know that we need not fear the future life if we make Christ our Friend and Guide here; our King whom we love and obey. When the old negro servant of Andrew Jackson was asked, after his master's death, whether he thought the General had gone to Heaven, he replied, "I don't know, marsa, but I reckon if he wanted to go, he went." If we want to inherit the home prepared for us, we shall follow Christ as the Way while we live here.

What we Know about the Life Hereafter

Jesus tells us that there is a home awaiting us. The universe is the Father's House, and in it there are many mansions, one of which shall be set aside for us. And as it is a place which will be prepared by Jesus, we may be sure that it will have in it everything we want. At death we go out of one home into another, into a far more beautiful home. In all his talk about his own end Jesus never

once said that he was going to die. He said, "I go away," "I go to the Father." And you remember that Paul said, "The time of my departure is at hand." They were like travelers setting out on a journey to some definite and far off place. And so when you think, "I am going to die," think rather, "I am going to set out on a journey that ends at the Father's mansion."

There is a life awaiting us. We are told that there will be "no night there," all darkness and things of the dark shall have vanished. "No curse" there, all the struggle and pain and mystery which have cursed this life shall be absent. "All tears shall be wiped away." No more sorrow there! The life that knows no ending will have nothing to mar its brightness and joy. We may think of death as like the passing out from a cold, foggy, gloomy land into the blaze and beauty of tropical climes. It will be as great a change for us as it is for the little grub when it wakes one day to find that it has acquired a pair of wings and is no more doomed to crawl, but can soar away and live in the sunshine and among the flowers.

There are tasks awaiting us. "His servants shall serve him," says John. It will be a place of rest, not of idleness nor stagnation, but the rest of congenial and happy service. Some people think that when they die they will do nothing for ever and ever. Some boys and girls have imagined that in Heaven there will be no tasks or lessons. But this is not John's idea. That Heavenly City is a busy city. The people do the King's business. And it is not Christ's teaching. He says, "I go to prepare," that is, "I go to be busy." And we may be sure we shall be busy, too.

There is a reward awaiting us. "They see him face to face." At last we shall see God—see, as Tennyson puts it, "our pilot face to face." Further, we shall see him "as he is." We have never done that. We have only seen him as the poets, preachers and artists have painted him. Moreover, we shall "know," find the key to all our problems, be compensated for all our losses and sacrifices. We shall receive that to which our love and service and fidelity have entitled us. "To die is gain," says Paul.

What else awaits us in the life beyond, we cannot tell. "What God has prepared for those that love him" none can guess. But we may be sure that there are other things, and that they are all as beautiful as those that have been mentioned.

I Am the Way

"I don't want to die; you see I don't know what it's like," said Jake in a trembling voice. He had been run over and was in the free ward of a hospital. "You're going to be up and hopping around by and by," said the nurse, "but I can tell you what's it's like, if that's what you want to know.

"When I was a little girl, I lived in the big city of London; and one dark, foggy day I had to cross the street at a corner where there are no policemen, but oh, so many cabs, busses, trains and carts. I looked into face after face of the passersby, but everybody looked cross and in a hurry. Presently I saw an old, white-haired gentleman with such a kind face that I touched his arm and said, 'Please, mister, won't you take me across the street?' He took my arm in his, and soon I was safely across. Afterward I found out that my old gentleman was Lord Shaftesbury, a great lord who sat at kings' tables, and helped to rule the nation.

"Now, when you come to the crossing between this world and the next, all you have to do is to look for One who helps us over. He'll be there. Not an old man but young and strong and beautiful. If you ask him, he will see you safely over, and give you a place in his home. You see he is far greater than earthly lords and kings. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you remember about him, so that you will not mind when you come to the crossing?"

A bright smile spread over Jake's thin face, and he nodded as well as a boy could with his head on a pillow. And I do not think he will ever forget the One who stands at the crossing.—Elizabeth Preston Allan, in The Congregationalist.

Sentence Sermons

He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.—John.

Death is a glorious event to one going to Jesus.—Livingstone.

Heaven is Homeland to the children of God.

I have so ruled my life that when death came I might face it without fear.—Henry Hanlock.

I sing for joy of that which lies
Stored up for us above.—Paul Gerhardt.

A COPPER RELIEF FROM BABYLONIA, NEARLY FIVE THOUSAND YEARS OLD, RESTORED FROM FRAGMENTS AND NOW IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

SECOND QUARTER

PROPHETIC TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP OF JUDAH: FROM ISAIAH TO THE EXILE

(First Half of a Six-Months' Course)

Aim: To lead the pupils in discovering and appreciating how God, through prophets and other leaders, gave help and guidance to the people of Judah, in order that the pupils may come to see the hand of God in their own lives and in all human affairs.

Lesson I—April 7

THE MINISTRY OF ISAIAH

GOLDEN TEXT: Then I said, Here am I; send me. Isaiah 6.8

LESSON Isaiah 6.1-13; 7.1-17; 20.1-6; 38.1-22

DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 116.12-19

ISAIAH 6.1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. 2 Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

6 Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven. 8 And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.

20.1 In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it; 2 at that time Jehovah spake by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put thy shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

38.1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith Jehovah, Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto Jehovah, 3 and said, Remember now, O Jehovah, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. 4 Then came the word of Jehovah to Isaiah, saying, 5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. ISAIAH'S HEAVENLY VISION, 6.1-4. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up: thus the prophet Isaiah

begins his account of his vision and call to service. "This is more than a date: this is an experience!" exclaims Dr. C. R. Brown. Isaiah had a vision, a dream, in which God was vividly real to him.

"Isaiah saw God. Do men see him today? Was he any nearer to Jerusalem than he is to London or New York? Did that old Hebrew possess faculties different from ours? Can we see and know God? What do we mean by seeing and knowing God? A spirit cannot be seen with physical eyes. We mean that we are so convinced of the reality of God that our thinking and living are determined by that conviction: so sure of him that we live as if we saw him by physical sight" (Amory H. Bradford).

"The conception of Isaiah's vision is singularly pure and lofty. It is a worshiper's thoughts when he draws near to God. The vision is but the service in the temple transfigured. The prophet fell into a trance while holding the service and musing on its meaning. Suddenly the house and service and the ministers became transfigured; the walls went apart, and the roof lifted itself up till it seemed the high dome of God's palace on high under which he stood, and the Lord the King sat upon his throne receiving the adoration of all holy beings" (A. B. Davidson). And his train filled the temple. There was

> "No face; only the sight
> Of a sweeping garment vast and white
> With a heaven that I could recognize."—(Browning)

"The king was dead, but God was alive. Who shall say that it was not something of the same strength of faith that came to James A. Garfield, when, speaking to a discouraged multitude in New York after the assassination of Lincoln, he exclaimed, 'God reigns; and the government of Washington still stands!'" (J. T. McFarland).

Above Jehovah stood the seraphim. The Hebrew words translated *seraphim* mean "the burning ones": compare Ezek. 1.13, 14. "They are not angels," Phillips Brooks tells us; "they are rather the expressions of the forces of the universe waiting there beside the throne of God; they are titanic beings in whom is embodied everything of strength and obedience which anywhere in any of the wilds of God is doing his will." These majestic beings stood in the presence of the Divine Being and reverently covered their faces with a pair of wings, for they were neither able nor worthy to look upon his resplendent brightness.

"We talk about God's incomprehensibleness as if it were a sad necessity; as if, if we could understand God through and through, it would be happier and better for us. The intimation of Isaiah's vision is something different from that. It is the glory of his seraphim that they stand in the presence of a God so great that they can never comprehend him. His brightness overwhelms them. They cover their faces with their wings; and their hearts are filled with reverence" (Phillips Brooks).

Humbly they covered their feet with another pair of wings, for in that sacred presence they were overwhelmed with a sense of their own unworthiness.

"Efface yourselves, efface yourselves; and the only way to do it is to stand in the presence of God, and be so possessed with him that there shall be no space nor time left for the poor intrusion of your own personality" (Phillips Brooks).

Eagerly the seraphim used the third pair of wings with which to fly, for they were winged for service.

"There are two extremes of error. In the one, action is disparaged. The man says: 'Not what I do but what I am is of significance. It is not action. It is character.' The result is that character itself fades away out of the inactive life. In the other extreme, action is made everything. The glory of mere work is sung in every sort of tune. Just to be busy seems the sufficient accomplishment of life. The result is that work loses its dignity, and the industrious man becomes a clattering machine. Is it not just here that the vision of the wings comes in? Activity in obedience to God. Work done for him and his eternal purposes. Doing no work which cannot be

held up in God's sight with the word, 'Lord, this is thine!' There is the field where character is grown, there is at once the cultivation of the worker's soul and the building of some corner of the Kingdom of God" (Phillips Brooks).

And one chanted unto another, "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts," and the other responded (as in antiphonal song), "The whole earth is full of his glory." "Holy, Holy, Holy": an ancient interpreter of the Scriptures explains: "Holy in the exalted skies, the temple of his glory; holy on earth, the scene of his governing strength; holy for ever and in all eternity." Their "thunderous praise" shook the foundations of the thresholds of the temple, and it was filled with smoke, the symbol of the Divine Presence. Could words express a grander conception of Jehovah? Could that conception be told with more majestic simplicity?

Assyrian Winged Figure

II. ISAIAH'S VISION OF SIN AND FORGIVENESS, 6.5-7. God's holiness and glory made Isaiah conscious of his own weakness, and he exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone." "What Isaiah actually felt was the shame, the distraction, the embarrassment, the blinding shock of a personal encounter with One whom he was utterly unfit to meet" (George Adam Smith). "Because I am a man of unclean life." Isaiah heard the seraphim praising God, and he at once became conscious that his lips (his nature) were unfit to join in the song. Recall Peter's exclamation, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," Lk. 5.8. "And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Their tongue and their doings are against Jehovah, Isa. 3.8. And yet another reason Isaiah gave for exclaiming, "Woe is me!"—he had seen the King, Jehovah of hosts. Who is able to stand before Jehovah, this holy God? 1 S. 6.20; Ex. 33.20.

"The deeper conviction of sin is always preceded by a clearer apprehension of the purity of God" (F. B. Meyer).

One of the Seraphim touched Isaiah's mouth with a live coal from off the altar, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thy sin is forgiven." Fire is the symbol and agent of purification. "When you strip away the imagery, and get down to the bare, warm truth, this is what you find—a man whose sense of moral lack had prompted that open confession, cleansed in that high hour by the direct action of the divine spirit upon his soul" (C. R. Brown).

"Consciousness of God is our guard against sin. To think of yourself, when your thoughts turn upon self, as God's child, servant, and friend; of your home as God's guest house; of your business as God's talent entrusted to you; of your recreation as God's way of keeping you healthy and wholesome; of your fellow beings as brothers and sisters in his family, would eliminate sin in your life. To gaze steadily upon the face of God is the one perfect way to noble character" (John Bayne Ascham).

III. ISAIAH'S CALL, 6.8. Isaiah now hears, not a command, but a request; and he answers, not from compulsion, but of free will. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" was the request.

"There is divine work which tarries until the appointed soul arrives. We are exalted to be fellow laborers together with God" (J. H. Jowett).

"Here am I; send me." The view of God gave Isaiah a view of self; the confession of sin brought a consciousness of salvation; the reception from God led to service for God.

"Isaiah did not say, 'Here are any number of fine people, send them. Here is a man who could perform the task better than I, send him.' He said what every man must say who means to stand right in the Day of Judgment, 'Here am I, send me'" (C. R. Brown).

IV. BY SYMBOLIC ACTION ISAIAH SEEKS TO IMPRESS HIS

MESSAGE, 20.1-6. In order to warn the people of Judah that reliance upon foreign states for help would be in vain (see The Historical Background), Isaiah felt impelled by God to go about for three years half clothed and barefoot like a captive, prophesying by this symbolic act that these neighboring states, far from giving aid to Judah, would themselves be taken captive by Assyria. Egypt and Ethiopia did not fall under the Assyrian yoke yet Isaiah was right in affirming that the people of Judah could not rely upon them for aid. The "sackcloth" which he cast aside was, it is thought, the distinctive outer garb of the prophet, comparable to the camel's hair raiment worn by John the Baptist. Walking about attired only in his inner garment, the long linen tunic, he would be exposed to the jeers of his countrymen.

V. THE CONDITIONAL NATURE OF THE PROPHETIC UTTERANCE, 38.1-5. Hezekiah, the best king that Judah ever had, became mortally ill, and Isaiah bade him set his house in order, for he was about to die. The stricken king turned his face to the wall, indicating his wish to be alone, and the prophet left him. Then with many tears, he assured Jehovah of his perfect loyalty: "I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight," he said. "In the absence of any complete belief in a future life, this world was held to be the only sphere within which God's moral government of mankind displayed itself, length of days being regarded as the reward of righteousness, and a short life being thought to imply great guilt. Hence Hezekiah, with the prospect of an untimely death before him, appealed to God to bear witness to his uprightness" (Dummelow).

"I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years," was the message which Isaiah, returning, gave the king from Jehovah. Hezekiah's intercession led to a revocation of the sentence of death which Isaiah had before pronounced.

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Place of Isaiah in Hebrew History

Hebrew history begins with Abraham, the father of the faithful. The stories about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, about the sojourn in Egypt, the exodus, the wanderings, and the settlement in Canaan are very familiar to you. The period of the judges followed, and Samuel, the last of the judges and the first of the prophets, chose Saul to be the first king. Saul, David and Solomon are the three kings who ruled over a united kingdom, and Elijah and Elisha were the chief prophets of that period. David lived about a thousand years before Christ. The kingdom was divided in 937 B.C. into the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The Northern Kingdom fell in 721 B.C. Uzziah, whose death seemed to Isaiah irreparable for the nation, reigned over Judah from 782 to 740 B.C. The great prophets of this eighth century before Christ were Amos and Hosea, Isaiah and Micah.

The Work of a Prophet

See page 20 of our Introduction.

The Prophet Isaiah

The odes and orations which are gathered in the Book of Isaiah make it the second longest prophetical book of the Bible. Chapters one to thirty-four (with the probable exception of 24-27) are the words of the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, who preached at Jerusalem during the last forty years of the eighth century B.C., during the reigns of Jothan, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He faced conditions squarely, saw their true meaning and far-reaching tendencies, and counseled kings and nations from the standpoint of the Divine Ruler who shapes all history. It was a stern message which he had to deliver, none other than a message of doom.

An interpreter of the social teachings of the Bible has this to say about the source of Isaiah's power: "Isaiah spoke with the voice of God because he chose to be sent. In the days when England used to press men into her naval service there was a saying that 'One volunteer is worth three pressed men.' Only the men who choose God are sent by God. They come with authority because they are not presenting theories of their own imagining or plans of their own contriving. They are lost in their cause."

The Background of Isaiah 6.1-8

Judah, the Southern Kingdom, was in her glory during the long reign of King

Uzziah. Of Uzziah it is written that he was marvelously helped till he was strong, and then in his arrogance he usurped the priest's office and was stricken with leprosy and died about 740 B.C. "Fifty years of royalty, and then a lazar-house. There had been no king like this one since Solomon; never, since the son of David brought the Queen of Sheba to his feet, had the national pride stood so high or the nation's dream of sovereignty touched such remote borders." Isaiah had grown up under the shadow of Uzziah's greatness, and his grief at the death of the king was great. He sought the temple, turning from the earthly king to the King of kings, and there had his vision of Jehovah and his call to service.

The Background of Isaiah 20.1, 2

Sargon was King of Assyria from 722 B.C. to 705 B.C. In 711 B.C. he sent his Tartan, or Commander-in-chief (Tartan is not a proper name, but the title of the chief officer of the king) to besiege the Philistine city of Ashdod (west of Jerusalem and three miles from the coast), which was in revolt. Sargon in an inscription says: "I marched on Ashdod . . . I besieged it, I conquered it," but he is merely claiming as his own exploit what was done by another at his command.

Sargon and his Field Marshal

The people of Judah, like those of Ashdod, were inclined to rely on some other power for aid in escaping from the power of her overlord. In one of his inscriptions Sargon mentions Judah and the peoples of Philistia, Edom and Moab, as appealing for assistance to Piru, King of Muzri (Egypt or Ethiopia) for help in hostile designs against Assyria. Against reliance upon outside help Isaiah warns the people.

The Background of Isaiah 38.1-4

Uzziah was succeeded by his son Jotham. The earlier chapters of the Book of Isaiah tell of the luxury and oppression of Jotham's reign. The reign of Ahaz, Jotham's son and successor, was one of almost unbroken disaster. When he came to the throne Assyria was beginning her series of conquests, gathering in one after another of the nations west of her. The kings of Syria and Israel tried to force Judah into an alliance against Assyria. They attacked Judah and took many captives, and then Edomites and Philistines pillaged the land. Isaiah counseled Ahaz to rely on Jehovah, but Ahaz turned to Assyria. Tiglathpileser came to his assistance, but imposed a burdensome tribute on Judah. Thus the step was taken which ended eventually (586 B.C.) in the captivity of Judah.

Hezekiah succeeded his father Ahaz, and reigned twenty-nine years. The date of his sickness would be the fourteenth year of his reign, since fifteen additional years were promised him, verse 5.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Writing in The Pilgrim Teacher, Miss Margaret Slattery tells this incident:

One day I sat with a young woman under the pines at Northfield. After a while she said: "I have taken my class of girls very easily. Often I haven't really studied the lesson. Sometimes I've taken a part of the time about other things. Not one of them is a member of the church. I am going to give them up. You make the standard so high. It is too hard."

"Yes," I said, "it is hard. Have you asked to be let off?"

"Oh, no," she said, "I shall not see my superintendent until October."

"I did not mean the superintendent," I said, "I mean the One who taught his

ISAIAH (*SARGENT*)

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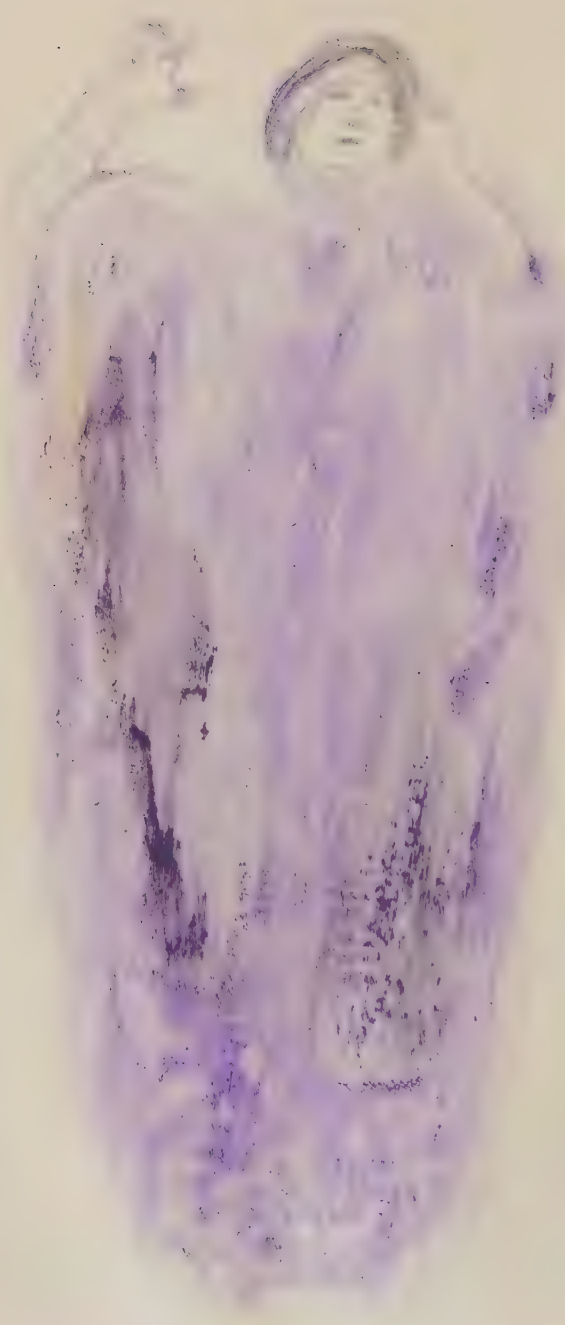


own class of twelve so patiently, against such great odds—and told us to go and to teach."

"Oh," she replied in a tone of surprise, "that is a strange way to put it. I never once thought of that."

"Before you give up the class," I said, "you would better get an honorable discharge from Headquarters." I reminded her of all her great advantages, her leisure, her ability, and then we talked of other things. On the last night of the conference, she walked to the auditorium with me. "I did not get my discharge," she said. "I am going to the —— school two hours each week this winter and learn how really to teach. If God will help me, I'll make that class over."

"Only he who sees the real Commissioner," Miss Slattery adds, "can find joy in the commission he has the honor to have intrusted to him—the greatest honor in the world, that of forming and transforming human character."

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

OBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION

Beginning the Lesson

There are Moslem zealots who have journeyed to Mecca and gazed upon the places which to them are sacred, and then, lest their eyes which have seen the holy city should profane that vision by looking thereafter upon unhallowed scenes, they have knelt down before white-hot bricks and let their heat burn out all power of sight forever. "The last thing I saw on earth was the Holy City," they proudly proclaim; "since then I have not seen." Such a Moslem pilgrim sees his Holy City and then deliberately blinds himself and makes himself useless. An Isaiah sees the Holy God and strengthened by that vision volunteers for service. Let us study that vision. (Explanations and Comments.)

Isaiah's Response to the Vision

Isaiah's sin being taken away, he is able to discern the voice of God himself. It is in the most beautiful accordance with what has already happened that he hears this not as a command, but as a request, and answers not of compulsion, but of freedom. What spiritual understanding alike of the will of God and the responsibility of man, what evangelical liberty and boldness, are here! Here we touch the spring of that high flight. Isaiah takes both in prophecy and in active service for the State. Here we have the secret of the filial freedom, the life-long sense of responsibility, the regal power of initiative, the sustained and unfaltering career, which distinguish Isaiah among the ministers of the old covenant, and stamp him prophet by the heart and for the life, as many of them are by the office and for the occasion. Other prophets are the servants of the God of heaven; Isaiah stands next the Son himself. His course, begun in freedom, he pursued without hesitation or anxiety; begun in utter self-sacrifice, it knows henceforth no moment of grudging or disobedience.—George Adam Smith.

What Isaiah's Vision Involved

Isaiah knew what that vision involved. It meant that he had to go into the midst of Jerusalem and bear his witness, and become the best-hated man in Jerusalem; it meant that his voice was to be lifted up against the luxury and self-indulgence of his time. It meant that he had to go and be a speckled bird in the midst of his people and be accused of the lack of patriotism. And it meant that he had to go and do the hardest thing that, perhaps, any man has been called upon to do: to prophesy and prophesy, and see the people growing worse and worse while he prophesied; see them growing blinder, more deaf, harder of heart: and he said, "Here am I; send me." My plea is that in the midst of all that troubles us about our national life God is calling us by this very need to go and bear our witness.—Charles R. Brown.

What Is a Call to the Ministry of God?

In these days with the solid attractions of so many other services insensibly

leading young men to look for the same sort of attractiveness in the ministry, it may prove a relief to some to ponder the simple elements of Isaiah's call to be a professional and life-long prophet. Isaiah got no "call" in our conventional sense of the word, no compulsion that he must go, no articulate voice describing him as the sort of man needed for the work, nor any of those similar "calls" which sluggish and craven spirits so often desire to relieve them of the responsibility or the strenuous effort needed in deciding for a profession which their conscience will not permit them to refuse. Isaiah got no such call. After passing through the fundamental religious experiences of forgiveness and cleansing, which are in every case the indispensable premises of life with God, Isaiah was left to himself. No direct summons was addressed to him, no compulsion was laid on him; but he heard the voice of God asking generally for messengers, and he on his own responsibility answered it for himself in particular. He heard of the divine need for messengers and he was immediately full of the mind that he was the man for the mission, and of the heart to give himself to it.—George Adam Smith, in The Expositor's Bible.

Why Horace Tracy Pitkin Made his Pledge of Service

When a student in Yale, Horace Tracy Pitkin became a Missionary Volunteer. The decision was made at Northfield. "'Why did I make it?' Simply because I could not see why I shouldn't. The question came, not 'Why purpose to go?' but 'Why not purpose to go?' The presumption is in favor of foreign missions. As I saw nothing that stood in the way of my accepting the challenge, I did accept it, believing that God had used my reasoning powers to that end." He resolved to equip himself spiritually and intellectually, and to go unless the way should be finally blocked.

As his seminary course drew to a close he applied to the American Board for an appointment. He said: "My study had shown me the true depth and glorious responsibilities of the missionary service, and I know perfectly that God wanted me to work for him in the uttermost parts of the earth. There has been no call from the cloud, but the facts of my life and the results of study inspired by and carried on under God have been a sure and certain call to his work in the waste places."—Condensed from Epoch Makers of Modern Missions, by Archibald McLean.

The Redeeming Vision

The supremacy of duty is one of the insistent facts of life. Its calls are clamant and will not be denied, and its claims are often tyrannous. Like the galley-slave of ancient Greece we sometimes seem to ourselves to be chained to the oar, while the constant drudgery to which we are bound both exhausts the strength and embitters the spirit. The lot of many lives appears to have but little of poetry in it, and to leave but little room for imagination. Duty for them is undisguised monotony. Each day brings the same weary round of work, and its very sameness only serves to add to its weight. It all seems so worthless, too, for no one is apparently bettered by all this laborious toil. Resentment at a hard lot, envy of others more favorably circumstanced, a mad longing for change and sometimes a hardly restrained break-away into lawless freedom—all these things are real temptations to the one to whom duty means nothing but irksome toil, unsympathetic oversight, and unappreciated endeavor. How real, then, is the need of seeing "also the Lord" under such conditions! He it is who has appointed you to the very work which you feel to be such a burden. He intends that by that very toil your own life shall be developed and beautified. Character is not moulded like soft iron, but wrought like tempered steel, and the daily rubs and vexations and irksomenesses are but his instruments used in the process. With this ray of light from the Throne upon your tasks, how different do they seem! As the sunlight falling upon common objects gilds them with a beauty not their own, so the knowledge of God's purpose transmutes the base metal of an ordinary life into the gold of his glory and transforms duty into delight. For to see him thus as the Lord of all duty is to see him also as the Lord of all power. He has appointed you. He is hence committed to the responsibility of equipping you with strength both to endure and to do.—J. Stuart Holden, in Redeeming Vision.

Not Disobedient to the Heavenly Vision

When I am dead,
May this with truth be said,
On the rude stone that marks my lowly head,

That, spite of doubt and indecision,
In spite of weakness, lameness, blindness,
Heart's treachery and fate's unkindness,
Neglect of friends and scorn of foes,
Stark poverty and all its woes,
The body's ills that cloud the mind
And the bold spirit bind,
Still through my earthly course I went,
Not disobedient
Unto the Heavenly Vision.—Harry Lyman Koopman.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. How does one receive a call to be a prophet? How can one be sure of his call? In what sense is every one a prophet? How does one receive a call to be a minister? How does one receive a call to a life of service? See Called of God, by A. B. Davidson; The Meaning of Service, by Harry E. Fosdick.

2. Do we expect recruits from our Church school for the work of ministers, missionaries, Christian Association secretaries, religious educators, welfare workers, etc.? Are there young people in our school capable of filling such positions? Have we discovered them? Can we make a wise investment of money and help those who cannot afford it, to prepare for such Christian service?

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Give an account of the condition of Judah at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign. 2. Study the reign of Hezekiah as told in 2 K. chapters 18-20; Isaiah chapters 36-39; 2 Chronicles chapters 29-32. 3. What is your estimate of the man? 4. Is it surprising that Hezekiah should be so different from his father Ahaz? 5. In what respects was Hezekiah's keeping of the Passover irregular? 6. In Num. 9, 10, 11 what persons were granted the privilege of postponing the keeping of the Passover?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

FINDING A LIFEWORK

Beginning the Lesson

Did you ever hear a boy—or girl—tell about some happening and say that it was "in the winter that I broke my thumb," or, "the day that I went skating on the pond"? This is the way in which many people date events, by some happening that was of importance to themselves. Mothers often say, "It was the year that John was born," or "the summer that Kate was so ill." How does our lesson begin? In that far-away time also a striking event was used to date another event, and so the prophet Isaiah says that it was "in the year that king Uzziah died" that he had his great vision which taught him many things; the holiness of God, the sinfulness of himself and his people, and the service to which God called him. How did the vision teach him the holiness of God? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Your Response to the Call for Service

When one person says to another, "Send me," he asks that he may be a messenger. When a person says in prayer to God, "Send me," he asks God to use him as a messenger. It is of messengers I shall speak today—God's special messengers whom he picks out for special service here and there.

You will find it very interesting to make sometime a Bible study, with pencil and paper, of all the special messengers named in the Bible, and of what each was sent to do. For example, beginning with this text, you will find Isaiah to have been a special messenger. That is a wonderful story, where Isaiah saw the magnificent glory of God in the temple, and the many-winged angels crowding around him. And he says: "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go!" You will find that Moses was a special messenger. God took him from the sheep that he was feeding and said: "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh. Certainly I will be with thee and this shall be a token unto thee that I have sent thee." You will find that John the Baptist was a special messenger. God called him from his childhood and trained him for his work, saying: "Behold I send my messenger before Christ's face, to prepare the way before him."

I heartily wish that the boys and girls of this church, beside making a Bible study of the special messengers of the old days, would make all through these years of their boyhood and girlhood a study of the special messengers of modern times, by which I mean books of biography, the lives of the men and of the women who at the call of God have done brave and good work in special ways for him,—some as soldiers; some as philanthropists; some as physicians; some as statesmen; some as ministers; some as business men; and some, oh, so many—as the helpers of others in quiet home life and in beautiful, compassionate, unselfish city work. I hope you will grow to love books of biography and all books that record the intense, unsparing, high-minded devotion of the brave, consecrated hearts that God has picked out to be his special messengers; not always, by any means, because they had greater gifts than some others, but because they had given themselves so devotedly to his service, to do anything he asked them to do—to stand always ready, expectant, eager to be specially used, eager to cry, in the prospect of any unselfish toil, "Here am I; send me."

I would like to suggest to some of you to study that short but wonderful poem by Robert Browning, called The Boy and the Angel, to see if you can find out the deep lesson it teaches about how the true special messenger must be truly and obediently willing to go or to stay just when and where God wants him to go or to stay.

I cannot help looking ahead, and trying to fancy where you will be, and what you will be doing as God's messengers twenty years hence. "Twenty years hence?" you say; "what a terribly long time!" Take a boy of fifteen. In twenty years he is thirty-five, and by that time it is pretty well established whether or not he has his commission for special service. As I look ahead now, over your twenty years to come, I cannot help believing that by that time many of the lives gathered here today will evidently be showing to the world that they are the special messengers of One who makes no mistake in sending out his own.

Your daily life will be your training. At home, at school, in work, in play, alone, with friends, in joy, in hardship, in health, in sickness, in your visits of consolation to the poor and suffering, in the place of prayer, in your time of Bible study, in the church of God, and at the communion table of him whose messenger you have asked to be, he who loves you, and who has chosen you to be his messenger, will be training you for your special life work.—Condensed from The Silver Cup, by Charles Cuthbert Hall.

Here Am I; Send Me

Not mine to mount to courts where seraphs sing,
Or glad archangels soar on outstretched wing;
Not mine in unison with celestial choirs
To sound heaven's trump, or strike the gentler wires;
Not mine to stand enrolled at crystal gates,
Where Michael thunders or where Uriel waits.
But lesser worlds a Father's kindness know;

Be mine some simple service here below,—
To weep with those who weep, their joys to share,
Their pain to solace, or their burdens bear;
Some widow in her agony to meet;
Some exile in his new-found home to greet;
To serve some child of thine, and so serve thee,—
Lo, here am I! To such a work send me.—Edward Everett Hale.

Sentence Sermons

Meditation is the eye wherewith we see God.—St. Ambrose.

We see ourselves when we see God.—Alexander Maclaren.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What was the origin of the Passover? (Ex. 12.) 2. Who were the "posts," verse 6? 3. What is meant by "sanctified themselves"? 4. Why is the phrase "from Beersheba even to Dan" used? 5. How was the Passover kept differently from usual? 6. What lesson of the First Quarter shows us that Jesus kept the spirit rather than the letter of the law? 7. What effect of this keeping of the Passover is recorded in 2 Ch. 31.1?

HEZEKIAH LEADS HIS PEOPLE BACK TO GOD

GOLDEN TEXT: Jehovah your God is gracious and merciful. 2 Chronicles 30.9

LESSON 2 Chronicles 30.1-27 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 145.8-17

2 CHRONICLES 30.1 And Hezekiah sent to all Isaiah and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto Jehovah, the God of Israel. 2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the assembly in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month. 3 For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem. 4 And the thing was right in the eyes of the king and of all the assembly. 5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem: for they had not kept it in great numbers in such sort as it is written. 6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may return to the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hand of the kings of Assyria. 7 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, who trespassed against Jehovah, the God of their fathers, so that he gave them up to desolation, as ye see. 8 Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were; but yield yourselves unto Jehovah, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever, and serve Jehovah your God, that his fierce anger may turn away from you. 9 For if ye turn again unto Jehovah, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that led them captive, and shall come again into this land: for Jehovah your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.

25 And all the assembly of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the assembly that came out of Israel, and the sojourners that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced. 26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem. 27 Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy habitation, even unto heaven.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. RITUAL WAS MADE FOR MAN AND NOT MAN FOR RITUAL, verses 1-4. Nisan, the first month of the Jewish year, corresponding to our month of April, was the regular time for keeping the Passover. In the reign of Hezekiah, however, the Passover could not be kept at that time, because a sufficient number of the priests had not sanctified themselves (had not undergone certain washings, abstinence and forms), nor had the people assembled at Jerusalem owing to the fact that the temple was not cleansed until the sixteenth day of Nisan, and the fourteenth day was the time for beginning the Passover. See The Historical Background. Accordingly, the King with the princes, and all the assembly in Jerusalem, had taken counsel together and had agreed to keep the Passover in the second month. The law (Num. 9.10, 11) allowed those who for good reasons were prevented from observing the Passover at the regular time to celebrate it in the second month, and this decision seemed right to the king and the whole assembly.

Dr. Charles Reynolds Brown contrasts Hezekiah's broad-minded action with the narrow scruples of those chief priests and Pharisees who were intent upon putting Christ to death upon the cross at another Passover, and who would not venture into Pilate's judgment hall lest their holy feet should suffer defilement and make them unfit to share in the sacred feast. "No one is entitled to speak with greater authority on the limitations of ritual than a strong advocate of the sanctity of ritual like the Chronicler; and we may well note, as one of the most conspicuous marks of his inspiration, the sanctified common sense shown by his frank and sympathetic record of the irregularities of Hezekiah's Passover. It says much for the healthy tone of the temple community in his day that he does not attempt to reconcile the practice of Hezekiah with the law of Moses by any harmonistic quibbles" (W. H. Bennett).

"Everything regarding form is elastic in the interests of the soul" (W. L. Watkinson).

II. THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION TO JUDAH AND ISRAEL, verses 5-12.

A decree was issued that everyone, from Beersheba to Dan, should come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. The customary phrase for the length of the land was "from Dan to Beersheba"; the Chronicler, however, in writing the history of Judah, naturally mentions the southern city first. A reform was needed, for the Passover had not been kept in great numbers in such sort as the law required, Ex. 12.6. Hezekiah wrote letters to all Israel and Judah and sent them throughout the land by the posts, or couriers. This was his message: "Ye children of Israel and Judah, turn again unto Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel [such a reference to the Hebrew fathers is common in the Old Testament: it served to remind the people of God's favor to them in the past], that he may return to the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hand of the Kings of Assyria." The Assyrian invasion had but recently taken place in which the Northern Kingdom, or Israel, had been conquered and most of the inhabitants transported to Assyria. Hezekiah warned the remnant, there in the Kingdom of Israel, who had not been carried off into captivity, not to bring upon themselves the punishment which had just befallen their fathers and brethren: "Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto Jehovah, and enter into his sanctuary." And Hezekiah held out the hope that if they would serve Jehovah, "his fierce anger might turn away from them," and even those who had already gone into captivity might return again to their land. "For Jehovah is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him." Some of the northern tribes laughed the messengers to scorn, but certain men of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem, and with all Judah they made a very great assembly.

An Assyrian Letter

"The same fire melts wax and hardens clay" (Alexander Maclaren).

III. THE PASSOVER KEPT, verses 13-22. The idolatrous altars that had been erected throughout Jerusalem in the reign of Ahaz the people took and cast into the brook Kidron, before they sanctified the paschal lamb and partook of the unleavened bread on the fourteenth to the twenty-first of the month. [Both names, Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, were given to the combined feast as a whole.] The priests, seeing the zeal of the people, were ashamed of their delay, and after making themselves ceremonially clean according to the law, they carried out their duties.

"Be noble, and the nobleness that lies
In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own" (Lowell).

Many of the people were not ceremonially cleansed and were therefore unfit to partake of the Passover; for them Hezekiah besought God's pardon. All kept the feast with gladness. The Levites and priests sang praises to Jehovah, and the king "spoke comfortably unto them," commended them for their part in the exercises.

That word "comfortably" is a singular one to use here, and yet fitting, for the words of commendation must have been a comfort to the Levites, who had not been called upon for service in the sanctuary for a long time, and were in need of encouragement. Possibly their knowledge of their duties was somewhat faulty, but, as Paul Leicester Ford somewhere says, the value of a compliment is not in its truthfulness, but in its being truth to the one who spoke it.

IV. THE PASSOVER PROLONGED, verses 23-27. The whole assembly continued the feast for yet another seven days, the animals for sacrifice being given by the king and the princes. And great was the joy in Jerusalem. The ceremonies ended with the blessing and prayer of the Levites.

"Now in that ancient and dramatic scene have we not a parable of living truth? I think that always when the burnt-offering begins, the song of the Lord begins also. Wherever there is devotion, there is gladness. Where

there is consecration, there is music. Let a man devote himself, with heart and soul, to his duty, to his calling, to his God, and voices that were silent yesterday will break forth into singing as he moves" (G. H. Morrison).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

To keep the Passover, verse 1. In the Feast of the Passover, the flight of the Israelites, its darkness, its hurry and confusion, were acted year by year, as in a sacred drama. Night falls: the stars come out; the bright moon is in the sky; the household gathers round, and then takes place the meal, of which every part is marked by the almost frantic haste of the first celebration, when Pharaoh's messengers were expected every instant to break in with the command, "Get you forth from among my people." The guests of each household at the moment of the meal rise and stand around the table. Their feet, usually bare when in the house, are shod as for a journey. Each member of the house holds a staff, as if for immediate departure; the long Eastern garments of the men are girt up, for the same reason, round their loins. The roasted lamb is torn to pieces, each snatching in his eager fingers the morsel which he might not else have time to eat. Not a fragment is left for the morning, as if it would find them gone and far away. The cakes of bread which they break and eat are tasteless for the want of leaven, as if there had been no leisure to prepare it, and finally the thanksgiving for the deliverance is always presented.—Dean Stanley, in History of the Jewish Church.

Had not sanctified themselves, verse 3. A missionary in India was teaching in the home of a Brahman when two of the children entered and ran to their mother. Drawing herself away the mother asked, "Have you bathed?" When they said they had not, the mother scolded them severely, and sent them off to be sprinkled lightly with cold water. To the missionary the mother explained: "They have just come from your school, and have been with lower caste children, so they are unclean, and must not touch me till they have bathed."

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Prosperity of Hezekiah's Reign

While Isaiah the prophet lived and labored in Judah, there were four kings on the throne: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. From his father, Hezekiah inherited "an empty treasury, a ruined peasantry, an unprotected frontier, and a shattered army." All these conditions Hezekiah changed. "Both in the capital and in the country he promoted the arts of peace like his ancestor Uzziah," says Schürer. "Towers and enclosures sprang up for the vast herds and flocks of the pastoral districts. The vineyards, oliveyards, and cornfields were again cultivated. The towers and fortifications of Jerusalem, the supply of water to the town, both by aqueduct from without and by reservoir hewn out of the solid rock, were for centuries connected with his name. 'Peace and truth' were the watchwords of his reign. When the merits of the kings were summed up after the fall of the monarchy, Hezekiah was, by deliberate judgment, put at the very top. There was 'after him, none like him among the kings of Judah, nor any that was before him.' " We must not neglect to note that much of Hezekiah's wisdom and righteousness was due to the prophet Isaiah, whose convictions and teachings Hezekiah wrought into deeds.

Hezekiah's Reforms

Upon his accession to the throne Hezekiah began his reforms. There were heathen altars everywhere in Jerusalem, idolatrous high places throughout Judah, the temple was polluted and closed, the lamps were put out, the sacred vessels were removed and the priests and Levites were scattered. Hezekiah directed the Levites to cleanse the temple. When this work was completed he re-inaugurated the temple services with a great dedication feast, with its sin offerings and burnt-offerings, thank-offerings and peace-offerings. "So the service of the house of Jehovah was set in order."

Hezekiah's next step was to send letters summoning all Israel as well as Judah to keep the Passover at Jerusalem.

The Fall of the Northern Kingdom, and the Remnant that Escaped

Upon the date of Hezekiah's accession depends our understanding of the words "all Israel," verses 1 and 6, and of "the remnant that are escaped of you out of the hands of the kings of Assyria." If it was before the fall of Samaria, 721 B.C., then the invitation was sent to the Northern Kingdom, and the Assyrian king was Tiglath-

pileser. If he came to the throne after the fall of Samaria, he made his appeal to the few who were left in the Northern Kingdom after most of their number had been taken into captivity by Sargon II of Assyria. This is the natural interpretation of verse 6.

An Assyrian Palace

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Beersheba to Dan

The cities of Dan and Beersheba, 150 miles apart—as far as from New York to Albany—were regarded as at the northern and southern limits of the undivided kingdom of David and Solomon. Dan was twelve miles north of Lake Huleh. Beersheba was forty-six miles south of Jerusalem.

The Brook Kidron

The idolatrous altars were cast into the brook Kidron. The Kidron is a winter torrent, dry in summer time, which separates Jerusalem on the east from the Mount of Olives. Thence the valley bed extends southeastwardly through the Wilderness of Judæa to the Dead Sea. It is often spoken of in the Old Testament as a place for casting out rubbish.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

King Hezekiah of Judah sent messengers to all Israel as well as to all Judah, urging the people to come to the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto Jehovah. He was not content to effect a reformation in his own realm, but reached out to those that were left in the Northern Kingdom, if by any chance he could win them for Jehovah. Some of those in the Northern Kingdom laughed the messengers to scorn and mocked them. Yet not all, for we hear of "divers in Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun who humbled themselves" and joined with Judah in the great revival.

Church school teachers are inclined to limit their efforts to their own particular classes, and even to those in their classes who are faithful attendants, allowing the irregulars to become more and more irregular until they disappear entirely. Let us have Hezekiah's spirit and outlook. Let us look after all Judah, all who belong or should belong to our individual classes; and at the same time let us not neglect Israel, but seek to increase the enrollment and regular attendance of the whole school.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

LEADING PEOPLE BACK TO GOD

Beginning the Lesson

Hezekiah is known as a king of Judah who did that which was right in the sight of Jehovah. His father Ahaz had been notorious for not doing what was right in God's sight. Hezekiah's life is proof of the fact that, no matter how much a home's influence is against righteousness, it is nevertheless possible for righteous sons to come from such a home. Not only was Hezekiah a man of high ideals, but he was thoroughgoing and uncompromising in carrying them out. When he came to the

throne reforms were sadly needed. Why? (Follow with The Historical Background and Explanations and Comments.)

Hezekiah's Loyalty

"'No king is safe who is not loyal to an authority greater than himself.' So declared a man who knew well the story of many kings and kingdoms. Here you strike the defining matter in the reign of Hezekiah. He was loyal to an authority greater than himself. The worship of Jehovah was given a new vitality throughout the kingdom. A new spirit moved through the capital city and among the people. Diplomacy was not to be given the first place and religion made incidental. Religion was to be made central, and king and people were to join in the worship of Jehovah and in obedience to his behests." (Follow with Explanations and Comments.)

Restoring Temples

When Dean Farrar was put in charge of Canterbury Cathedral, he sought to restore the ancient church which was founded by St. Augustine to its original beauty and grandeur. To do this he wisely refrained from tearing down any part of it, and from adding a single wall or pillar. He simply removed the heaped dust of ages, and cleaned away the grime with which irreverent time had hidden the beautiful frescoes upon the walls.

His work was successful. The graves of martyrs who died for the cause which they believed to be true were discovered; beautiful chapels were dug out of the heaped earth, in which ages ago men and women, striving to find God, prayed to him, and from the cleaned walls the faces of holy men of old again looked down with warning or triumph in their eyes.

Americans have no ancient cathedrals to clean and restore. In this country now the work of reform is that of human beings. Christians and agnostics are alike busy with schemes to uplift the degraded and criminal classes. Perhaps they could gain a useful hint in their work from the wise dean.

If you would help your neighbor, don't begin by battering down his manners, his prejudices, his individual character, or by building up your own mind in him. Clean away the rubbish of his evil life, and uncover the original good in him.

Bishop Johns, preaching to the negro convicts in a Richmond jail, once said, "Don't think of your thefts and fights, but of the time when you were good boys, and knew nothing of stealing and killing."

In the hearts of many of the worst men as in the dark crypts of the cathedral lie hidden forgotten altars and the likeness of a holy face. Uncover them. David, after all his crimes, said of God, "He restoreth my soul."—The Youth's Companion.

The Renaissance of Religion Needed

We are living in an age of unrest and confusion and disillusionment. And many noble spirits are fearing that Christianity will not rise triumphant from the wreck into which so much of contemporary life has fallen.

It is important to recognize that the heart of contemporary pessimism is not merely a distrust of religion; it is a distrust of life itself. It will occur at once to some of us that a world-wide suspicion that civilization has the seed of decay in it, a world-wide distrust of the powers of man, is not a matter to dishearten the Christian. As a matter of fact, such experiences are preparing the soil for a new activity of religion. The complacent age is the only age which Christianity cannot touch.

Another aspect of the present situation deserves our attention. More and more are masses of men confident in their belief that the Church has failed them. The scornful sense that it has inflated its verbal currency and has had no store of gold to justify its productivity in paper-money has made its way almost everywhere. No doubt the Church deserves much of this hostility. No doubt it has failed in moral strength, in spiritual insight, in practical brotherhood, in capacity for leadership, and in that intellectual acumen which really penetrates to the heart of a situation. Even so we must insist that it has done more to keep the soul alive in the present day than any of its critics are ready to admit. And we must protest against that lighthearted condemnation which is based upon no study either of the difficulties which the Church has confronted or of the stupendous services which it has rendered in spite of those difficulties. At once, however, we must declare that the root of the situation is not to be found here. Religion and an institution are not synonymous. "Church" and "Christianity" are not two different words for the same thing. If an organization represents the living Christ incompletely or even with gross in-

adequacy, we find it all the more necessary to push aside the instrument and to reach the Master himself. The word of Browning's great poem is the word for the ages: "See the Christ stand."

Our leaders must pay the price of a new and resilient and kindling relation to their Master and Lord. The moment of preoccupation with him and with his creative, loving power is the moment when great creative and transforming energies begin to be realized upon the life of the world. Men and women and little children everywhere must be encouraged to make the Christian religion a personal adventure of the spirit. So the song which the Franciscans sang over Europe in the thirteenth century and which swept over England in the eighteenth century shall once more move over the land. With all this creative renewal of the inner life at every step the new life within must become a new life without. The new heart must become the new activity. The social program must be seized and revitalized and made effective and triumphant by those who bring to it the resources of a vital contact with the Savior of the world. All this must be interpreted by minds sharp with all the powers of close analysis in the speech which our contemporary experience has made compelling. And thus, with a new spirit of prophecy and a new spirit of action based upon a new anticipation in the energies released by the living Christ, we shall go forth into that day which contains all for which we hope. The renaissance of religion will be an actuality in our hearts and before our eyes.—Condensed from a sermon delivered in England by Lynn Harold Hough.

Where Reforms Must Begin

In a conversation with an American newspaper correspondent about the reform movement in Russia, Tolstoi asked, "Why not try the development of the individual? The state cannot be stronger than its weakest link. You must build up the individual before you build up the state." Then he remarked that he could say little good of the present Russian government, but admitted that it was better than the government of Herod and Pilate, under which Jesus lived and taught, and developed his perfect manhood.

"So we seek to alter conditions," he said, "rather than ourselves, I suppose because we find it easier."

The conclusion of this great Russian philosopher is not new. It is so old and so obvious that men are continually forgetting it in their search for some cure for the evils of government, to say nothing of the evils of society.

The constant demand for change in the method of electing public officers and in the system of doing business, and the appeal for new laws to eradicate abuses that arise from defects in human nature, and can be cured only by reforming the individual, come from persons who seek what they regard as the easier way—as Tolstoi puts it. He might also have described it as the futile way.

Appeals are now before Congress and the State legislatures for the passage of hundreds, if not thousands, of laws for the reform of various abuses. The idea seems to prevail that if a law is enacted forbidding anything that thing will no longer be done. Men and women trust in the efficacy of a statute, forgetting that in a free country law is really nothing more than the will of a majority. Many a statute which has been passed because no one could raise an objection to its desirability has been so remote from the general state of public and private practice that it has never been enforced.

The effective remedy for abuses lies in an awakened public sentiment rather than in new laws. Laws are important and necessary, but one should never forget that the passage of a law is the smallest part of a great reform. The struggle comes when the law is to be enforced, and the struggle is especially hard when the law is in advance of public sentiment. Such progress as is made is based upon the growth in grace of the common man.—The Youth's Companion.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Hezekiah's reign. See Lecture thirty-eight of Stanley's History of the Jewish Church, Vol. II.

2. Reforms which our country needs.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Of what does the Book of Isaiah consist? 2. What is the historical background of our text? 3. What need of comfort had the people whom the prophet is addressing? 4. What is meant by "her warfare is accomplished," verse 2? 5. What

does the word *comfort* mean? 6. What does Paul say in 2 Cor. 1.3, 4 about the use we are to make of the comfort we have received from God?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

A LEADER WITH A HIGH PURPOSE

Beginning the Lesson

How long do our Church and our Church school services together last? Have you ever remained away from either because the time seemed long to you? In Isaiah's day a religious service was held for seven days, and then, because the people had not had such a service for many years, they decided to repeat it for seven days more! The keeping of the Passover was wholly different from our religious services, but it was one way by which in those ancient days the people worshiped God. What did it commemorate? Why in the time of Isaiah had the Passover not been kept for many years? King Ahaz had led the people to worship idols. His son, Hezekiah, was a true follower of God, and when he came to the throne he determined to do everything in his power to bring his people back to the worship of God.

An English writer (Emily Huntly, in The Sunday School Chronicle) tells in an interesting way the story of our lesson. Here is a part of her account:

A runner, bearing news from King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah, toiled up the hill upon which stood the city of Jokneam, not far from Mount Carmel. The inhabitants crowded into the market-place that they might miss no word of the tidings. The last time the post had visited them it had been to announce the death of Ahaz and the accession of Hezekiah to the throne. Amongst the crowd awaiting the news were two—father and son—who spoke together in a low tone, unheard by the excited, pushing folk about them.

"This will be the first proclamation of King Hezekiah from the throne. God grant it may be in keeping with his holy religion!" He glanced up disdainfully to the high ground upon which gleamed a gilded statue of Baal, the sun-god.

The runner from the South had by now got back his breath from the climb up to the city. He stood upon a platform in the center of the market-place, and holding up a scroll of parchment, began to read, in a loud voice, the king's proclamation. With kindly persuasion, Hezekiah besought the people to give up their idolatry and return to the Lord. He desired them once again to worship in Jerusalem at the appointed feasts, especially the approaching Passover, and concluded with the beautiful words: "For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn his face from you, if ye return to him."

"Father," the boy whispered, excitedly, "I have never been to Jerusalem! Will you not go to the feast and take me with you?"

. . . . . .

"So, Ishmael," said the lads, his companions, to him, "thou hast been to the Passover! And what good has it done thee?"

"It was glorious!" answered the boy. "I would ye had but seen the animals for the sacrifices! Two thousand bullocks and seventeen thousand sheep! And the priests, all in white, and the temple, golden and shining, and the great candlesticks, and the music!"

"Thou wert away more than the week, Ishmael," said one of the lads.

"Aye," answered Ishmael, "the king asked if all were willing to spend another seven days in worship, and all were very willing, for they said there had not been so joyful a time in Jerusalem since the days of our lord King Solomon. And what think ye?" went on the boy, excitedly, "there is not a heathen altar or image to be seen in Jerusalem. The king has had them all taken away. He says he will trust only in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! And now there are men coming all through the country to throw down the altars and break the images!"

"Look Up!"

Albert Davis came to the city partly for its greater opportunities and partly to escape temptations that assailed him in his old home. In new environment and under helpful influences he hoped to make a fresh start in building a strong, manly character. He joined the church and tried to surround himself with all that he knew to be good. But the climb was a hard one. He did not advance in his work as quickly as he had hoped; he made few real friends, and he was lonely. He wondered if it were all worth while.

One Sunday his pastor invited him to his study for a chat. By careful, tactful

questioning he led him to tell of his past, his aspirations, his temptations and his discouragements.

After Albert had told his story, the minister said: "When I was a boy I lived near a church on which a chimney was being built. The chimney was on the outside and ran straight up through the gable at the back. With a boy's curiosity, I watched the masons at their work, and as the chimney rose I longed to climb up and see the top of it. One day a workman dropped his trowel and it fell to the ground. I picked it up and ran with it to the foot of the ladder.

"'Can you bring it up, my lad?' the mason called.

"Eagerly I mounted the ladder. When I had reached the top and was about to hand the workman his trowel, I was startled by a voice from below: 'What did you let the boy go up there for? He's sure to fall.'

"Of course I looked down, and, because I was a little fellow, the distance was appalling. I felt sick and dizzy; my flesh grew cold; my hands and knees trembled. The man above saw my condition.

"'Look up, and you'll be all right!' he said quickly. 'Don't look down; keep looking up, and you won't fall.' I lifted my eyes to his. The dizziness left me, and I felt secure.

"Still looking upward, I made the descent safely; but if I had looked down, I should probably have fallen, for I have never been able to look down from a great height without feeling faint.

"I have found that the mason's words are an excellent motto for life. 'Look up! Keep looking up! Don't look down, and you won't fall!' As I looked up into his face that day to receive confidence and strength, I have many times looked up to my Heavenly Father for wisdom and help, and he has never failed me."

The minister laid his hand on Albert's shoulder. "Look up, my lad," he said heartily. "Keep your mind fixed on high ideals, and you won't fall."

The young man's face glowed. "God helping me, I will!" he said fervently.—The Youth's Companion.

Finding the Trail

A party enjoying the charms of Lake Placid in the Adirondacks thought that they would do a little exploring. They paddled to one of the larger islands in the lake, and leaving their canoe on the shore began to look around. It was in the late fall, and the island was deserted. A signboard indicated the places of interest on the island and the distance to each. From the signboard a well worn path started into the woods, and this the explorers followed. It soon grew less plain, and finally disappeared entirely. Returning to the signboard, they found another path, which they followed with the same result. Yet the sign plainly said that the trail must be followed to reach these places of interest. One of the party, happening to look up, saw a piece of cloth fastened on the trunk of a tree about eight feet above the ground. Looking beyond and up, they saw a piece of cloth similarly placed on a tree about twenty feet ahead, and then another and another. The trail to be followed was not on the ground but high up. Not the path that men's feet had trodden was to be the safe guide, but the signals that had been placed for them to look up to. Example in life is of great value, but those who try to live a right life by walking in the paths in which others have walked often will be puzzled. Do not make your life too much an imitation of those about you, even though you love and honor them. Fix your eyes on high principles and noble ideals; follow them, and you will find and keep the trail that leads to life's best goals.—The Wellspring.

Sentence Sermons

We can never begin good things too early.—Alexander Maclaren.

"So I ask thee, give me grace
My own life's place to fill,
That I may ever walk with thee,
And ever do thy will;
That in each duty, great or small,
I may be faithful still."

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is the dictionary definition of the verb *to comfort?* 2. What is meant by "speaking comfortably," verse 2? 3. How does God comfort you? 4. What New Testament hero do verses 3-5 recall? 5. What do the last two verses of our text tell us about God?

LESSON III—APRIL 21

COMFORT FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

GOLDEN TEXT: As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you. Isaiah 66.13

LESSON Isaiah 40.1-11 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 30.1-5

ISAIAH 40.1 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins.

3 The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the uneven shall be made level, and the rough places a plain: 5 and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.

6 The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. 7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Jehovah bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9 O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up on a high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God! 10 Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him: Behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. 11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, *and* will gently lead those that have their young.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH HAVE SUFFERED THEIR FULL PENALTY, verses 1, 2. We pass today in thought from the time when Judah was enjoying great prosperity under good King Hezekiah (our last lesson), to the time when Jerusalem had fallen prey to the Babylonian power and had been laid waste, and the majority of her people carried away into exile in Babylonia. Read The Historical Background.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. How great was the people's need of comfort is shown in Isa. 40.27; 49.14. Who the *ye* are is problematical: "the prophets, or the prophetically-minded among the people; certainly not the priests." "The prophets may be nameless, but the Deity who speaks through them speaks as already known and acknowledged: '*My* people, saith *your* God.' By these impersonal voices a personal revelation is made."

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem. Speak comfort to the heart of Jerusalem, is Dr. McFadyen's translation. The prophets were to put hope into the heart of the exiles, to strengthen them by an assurance of a speedy return to the home land. Jerusalem (then in ruins) is "an ideal representation of the people." "The city had suffered in and with her exiled people, and their deliverance was hers" (G. W. Wade). Tell her that her warfare is accomplished (her time of service, her exile, is over); that her iniquity, her guilt, is pardoned; that she has received double penalty (ample punishment) for her sins.

"The prophet's charge is laid upon all who would speak of Christ to men. Speak to the heart, not only to the head or the conscience, God beseeches in the person of his ambassadors. The substance of the message may well find its way to the heart; for it is the assurance that the long, hard service of the term of exile is past, that the sin which brought it about is forgiven, and, more wonderful and gracious still, that God's mercy reckons that the ills which follow our faithlessness have more than expiated it" (Alexander Maclaren).

II. AVANT-COUREURS DIRECT CELESTIAL POWERS TO PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD, verses 3-5. Now we come to the passage which gave John the Baptist the great theme of his preaching. "John's immovable humility pierced the very heart of the prophecy when he answered the question, 'Who art thou?' with 'I am a voice.' The voice was unnamed; 'Why, what does it matter who I am?'" (Alexander Maclaren).

The prophet hears a heavenly being, hears the voice of one that crieth; or, as the words have been rendered, the prophet exclaims, "Hark! One is calling, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah; make level in the desert a highway for

our God." "Who the crier is, remains concealed; his person vanishes in the splendor of his calling, and falls into the background behind the substance of his cry. The cry sounds like the long-drawn trumpet-blast of a herald. The crier is like the outrider of a king, who takes care that the way by which the king is to go shall be put into good condition. The King is Jehovah, and it is all the more necessary to prepare the way for him in a becoming manner, that this way leads through the pathless desert. We may, or rather apparently we must, imagine the crier as advancing into the desert, and summoning the people to come and make a road through it. The disciple answers to the reality; but, as we shall frequently find as we go on, the literal meaning spiritualizes itself in an allegorical way. The summons proceeds in a commanding tone, verse 4. The command, according to its spiritual interpretation, points to the encouragement of those that are cast down, the humiliation of the self-righteous and self-secure, the changing of dishonesty into simplicity, and the unapproachable haughtiness into submission. In general, the meaning is that Israel is to take care that the God who is coming to deliver it shall find it in such an inward and outward state as befits his exaltation and his purpose" (Delitzsch).

"No sensible person expects to find a house built or a dinner cooked unless preparations are first made, the materials assembled, and the work done. And yet many people act as if preparation for spiritual realizations were totally unnecessary. They neglect the private and public practices of religion, and then feel aggrieved because God seems unreal to them. There are laws of preparation for enjoying spiritual events just as there are laws of preparation leading up to any other realization which you can name. Is it not a shame to spend so much time preparing for everything else, and to spend so little time preparing oneself to perceive and appreciate spiritual experiences?" (Tertius van Dyke).

And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it. All mankind shall see Jehovah's glorious deeds for his people.

III. ANOTHER VOICE PROCLAIMS THAT EARTHLY MIGHT PASSES, BUT GOD'S WORD IS ETERNAL, verses 6-8. Hark! one is saying, Cry—Proclaim, Preach. "What shall I cry?" is the response. "Death had been busy with the exiles for more than a generation. There was no longer any human representative of Jehovah to rally the people's trust. It was little wonder, then, that a nation accustomed to be led, not by ideas like us Westerners, but by personages who were to it the embodiment of Jehovah's will and guidance, should have been cast into despair by the call, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.' What sort of call was this for a people whose strong men were like things uprooted and withered! How could one be, with any heart, a herald to such a people!

" 'What can I call?
All flesh is grass,
And all its beauty like a wild-flower!
Withers grass, fades flower,
When the breath of Jehovah blows upon it.
Surely grass is the people.'

"Back comes a voice like the east winds for pitilessness, to the flowers, but of the east wind's own strength and clearness, to proclaim Israel's everlasting hope:

" 'Withers grass, fades flower,
But the word of our God endureth for ever.'

"Everything human may perish, the day may be past of the great prophets, of the priests. But the people have God's word; when all their leaders have fallen, this shall be their rally and their confidence.

"All this is too like the actual experience of Israel in exile not to be the true interpretation of this third, stern Voice. Their political and religious institutions, which had so often proved the initiative of a new movement, or served as a bridge to carry the nation across disaster to a larger future, were not in existence. Nor does any Moses, as in Egypt of old, rise to visibleness from among his obscure people, impose his authority upon them, marshal them, and lead them out behind him to freedom. But what we see is a scattered and leaderless people, stirred by the ancient promises of God, and everywhere breaking out at the touch of these into

psalms and prophecies of hope. We see them expectant of redemption, we see them resolved to return, we see them carried across the desert to Zion, and from first to last it is the word of God that is their inspiration and assurance. Their hope is in his word; it is the instrument of their salvation, and their destiny is to be its evangelists" (George Adam Smith).

IV. THE TRIUMPHAL COMING OF JEHOVAH TO ZION, verses 9-11. "To this high destiny the fourth Voice now summons them, by a vivid figure:

'Up on a high mountain, get thee up,
Heraldess of goodness, O Zion!
Lift up with strength thy voice,
Heraldess of goodness, Jerusalem!
Lift up, fear not, say to the cities of Judah:—
Behold, your God.
Behold, my Lord Jehovah, with power he cometh,
And his arm rules for him.
Behold, his reward is with him.
As a shepherd his flock he shepherds;
With his right arm gathers the lambs,
And in his bosom bears them.
Ewe-lambs he tenderly leads.'

Do not the mingled martial and pastoral strains exactly suit the case of the Return? For this is an expedition on which the nation's champion has gone forth, not to lead his enemies captive to his gates, but that he may gather his people home. Not mailed men, in the pride of a victory they have helped to win, march in behind him, but a herd of mixed and feeble folk, with babes and women, in need of courage and gentle leading wander wearily back. And, therefore, in the mouth of the heraldess the figure changes from a warrior-king to the Good Shepherd. How true a picture, and how much it recalls! Fifty years before, the exiles left their home (as we can see to this day upon Assyrian sculptures) in closely-driven companies, fettered, and with the urgency before them of grim soldiers, who marched at intervals in their ranks to keep up the pace, and who tossed the weaklings impatiently aside. But now, see the slow and hastily-gathered bands wander back, just as quickly as the weakest feel strength to travel, and without any force or any guidance save that of their Almighty, Unseen Shepherd" (George Adam Smith).

"That was the good news the messengers hastened to make known. And so it is that our feet, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, are to be shod with similar readiness, the readiness begotten of our own experience of the goodness of God, the readiness to go out on the rough and troubled roads of life, into its highways and its byways, its broad streets and its narrow streets, carrying the good cheer of the news of God's redeeming love and grace. To be ready to go wherever there is any form of bondage, singing the gospel song of joy and freedom,—that is the privileged service of the soldiers of the Lord" (J. H. Jowett).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Every mountain and hill shall be made low, verse 4. The idea finds some parallel in what is related of oriental sovereigns, for Justine says of Xerxes: He reduced mountains to plains, and built up valleys (*convexa vallium æquabat*). Diodorus Siculus records that when Queen Semiramis in her march to Ecbatana reached a mountainous district, instead of making a detour around it, she constructed a direct road across it by diggnig down the precipices and filling up the hollows.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Isaiah 40-55

The Book of Isaiah contains sixty-six chapters. It consists of a number of independent orations, sometimes interspersed by narrative. Some of the orations are entitled "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz," but none of those in the latter part of the book are so called. Chapters 40-66 nowhere claim to be his.

The first thirty-nine chapters reflect the historical situation of the eighth century before Christ, when Isaiah the son of Amoz lived and Assyria was the great world power. In the next sixteen chapters we find the situation entirely changed. Assyria,

against which Isaiah prophesied, has disappeared, and in her stead is Babylon, where the Jews are in exile. To these exiles the prophet announces that Jehovah has not deserted them, they are to be restored to their own land; Jehovah's power and righteousness are to be vindicated; a high privilege awaits the restored Jerusalem in a great saving mission to the world.

The author of these chapters (40-55) cannot have been Isaiah the son of Amoz who lived in the eighth century B. C., unless these chapters were prophecy, not history, and Isaiah foresaw the calamities of exile and deliverance at the hands of a ruler whose very name (Cyrus) was known to him, although that ruler lived a century and a half later. And we know that a prophet's message was always primarily to the people of his own time. The inspiration of a book of the Bible does not depend upon its authorship. "The important thing is that it is a part of God's message to men, not that a certain man gave the message." We regard the Book of Isaiah as the work of two or more prophets, each of them wonderful in his grasp of the situation of his time and in his knowledge of God and his will. The author of chapters 40-55 is generally referred to as Deutero-Isaiah, or Second Isaiah; sometimes as The Great Unknown.

Regarding these chapters as history, we see that they must have been written before Cyrus captured Babylon in 538 B. C., for the Israelites were still in exile (43.14; 47.5-9; 48.14), and after 546 B. C., if the glowing language in which the prophet refers to Cyrus as trampling on rulers like clay may be taken to infer that he had already conquered Crœsus and the Lydian Kingdom.

These chapters have been called The Exiles' Book of Consolation. Their purpose seems to have been to comfort the exiles in Babylonia, to assure them of their speedy deliverance which God would bring to pass through the instrumentality of Cyrus (45.1, 13; 46.11; 48.14, 15), and to remind them of their high destiny as the servants of Jehovah, his messengers through whom his truths are to be given to the world.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, get thee up on a high mountain. Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God! Those who are to tell the glad tidings must get where they can see wonderful things, and then tell the people what they have seen. We must be ravished with what we have seen and felt, we must know for ourselves, and then we shall be prepared to cry with one of old, "Behold your God!"—Margaret Bottome.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE SOURCE OF TRUE COMFORT

Beginning the Lesson

This selection from the Book of Isaiah is a beautiful introduction to the series of consolatory addresses that follow. See The Historical Background. How the hearts of the exiles in Babylon would be cheered by the prophet's assurance of Jehovah's care for them! So great is the divine compassion that the punishment they have undergone is deemed more than sufficient requital of their guilt; so near at hand is their return to the homeland that all obstacles which might retard that return are to be removed at once; so tender is the divine care for their helplessness that it can only be compared to the care of the shepherd who gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that have their young.

"The prophet's state of mind borders on ecstasy; his ears are filled with the music of heavenly voices telling him that the night is far spent and the day is at hand; and although his home is with the exiles in Babylon, his gaze is fixed throughout on Jerusalem and the great divine event which is the consummation of Israel's redemption."

Follow with Explanations and Comments.

The God of All Comfort

A very interesting study is that of the names and titles ascribed to God by the inspired writers. In a very telling way, these bring out the nature, and set forth the character, of the Supreme Being. We are drawn to those titles which glorify his greatness, might, power and infinite majesty.

But more beautiful is it to see the gracious, gentle, kindly and compassionate qualities these titles set forth. And none appeals to us more than this one: "The God of all comfort!" If there is one thing we need more than any other in our

life experience, it is comfort. A child in trouble flies to its mother, for it knows that in her love, sympathy and help, it will find comfort and will have its tears dried.

And what are we, men and women, but children—only of a larger growth! To whom shall we go when in trouble? Not to our fellow-men, for some will not take our trials to heart; and those who do feel for us often are quite unable to help us. And even if we do not suffer from personal distress, who can help being sorely grieved over the world's sorrows?

Not in the wisdom of statesmen, not in the sympathy of friends, not in any human resort, can we then find consolation. But thanks and adoration to our Father, who knows all things whatsoever we need, we can find it in "the God of all comfort." Looking to him in faith and prayer, he will solve our every perplexity, calm our every fear, soothe our every grief, and give us perfect peace. Let us never let go this assurance of divine and Fatherly comfort!—Vincent G. Burns.

The Sources and Uses of Comfort

"Comfort" is a word of varied significance in the minds of its users. It ranges from the idea of merely feeling good to receiving substantial help in time of need. One man says that he must take a little comfort, and he takes off his coat and reclines on a sofa; another man says that he finds comfort in a luxuriously furnished room, where is everything designed to give him personal enjoyment. Yet another has a more exalted view of comfort, when he tells of a friend who has gone to another in bereavement and sorrow, and has given him comfort by sympathy and Christian counsel. In view of these different uses of the word, what is comfort and what is its true gain?

Our English word "comfort" primarily means "to bring strength," or "to bring courage." The idea is not so much to soothe, or to pacify, as to enable one to endure manfully, to have needed strength to bear up under one's trials and sorrows. It was for comfort that the old divine longed when he cried, "Lord, lighten my burden, or strengthen my back." Comfort in this sense can come only from God. And the giving of such comfort, by any true friend, is manifesting so far the divine spirit, and bringing help from God.

As used in the Bible, the word "comfort" means "to be alongside of" another, to give help by sharing one's burden or trial. Taken in this sense, its best sense, what one word in our language intended for our help or encouragement or cheer, or intended as counsel to us to be a help to others, equals the word "comfort" in its fulness of blessing for us and for our fellows? Comfort includes God-likeness as shown in God's dealings with man, and God-likeness as shown in man's best ministry to his needy fellows. See, for example, in the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians, a beautiful illustration of the beauties of comfort as coming from God to man, and as coming from man to man:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ. But whether we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or whether we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which worketh in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: and our hope for you is steadfast; knowing that, as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so also are ye of the comfort."

Here is an inspired statement of the source and uses of comfort, telling us where it came from and what it is good for. All comfort is from God. God it is who comforteth us in all our affliction. God himself is our stand-by in our every need,—what need, then, should be felt by us? Every child of God can rest in the assurance that in all his affliction, under his every trying pressure, God is near to him, standing by him, to give him help and comfort all the day long. Could man have more gain than in such comfort in his need?

But what does God give us comfort for? Is it to enable us to feel it, and to enjoy it for ourselves? What is the inspired counsel as to that point? The "God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any affliction, through the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." That is it. Comfort is given us in order that we may pass it along to somebody else. We have comfort, so that we may give comfort. All comfort is from God. When we receive comfort, we receive one of God's choicest

blessings. When we give comfort, we give one of God's choicest blessings. It is a high privilege to give comfort to another, and thus to be a minister of God in his choicest ministry to others. Yet that privilege God grants to us all along our earthly life course.

A little child sees her child companion in tears over a broken doll. That trial seems but a little matter to grown-up persons, but to the little child it is a very real sorrow, and her companion understands it all. So the child companion gets right down alongside of the weeping child, and weeps with her and gives her comfort. That child comforter, in a sense, does God's work to God's children, and God approves that ministry of comfort.

From the little child crying over a broken doll up to the strongest man who is felt as a power among the nations, comfort (comfort, the getting alongside of another lovingly in time of trial) is needed, and one who comforts gives help that tells. Napoleon was not a weak man. He is not one of whom we think as needing comfort. Yet in his early military career, when for a time he seemed to have only enemies, and no means even to assist his mother, who required help, Napoleon was discouraged, and was actually on his way to the riverbank to put an end to his life when an old school friend met him. That friend, seeing Napoleon's trouble of mind, pressed him to tell the cause. Finding Napoleon's need, Demasis gave him help. He was down alongside of Napoleon, and gave him comfort. It was an important matter to the world that Napoleon had comfort just then and in that way.

We do not recognize, as we should, God's ministry of comfort to us. We have comfort from God many a time when its memory goes out of our minds almost as soon as the comfort has come in. We do not give comfort to others as often as we might. From the little child below us to the man who is way above us in ability and influence, yet who may not be above the need of comfort, there are heart-calls for comfort, and God gives us the privilege, and lays on us the duty, of giving comfort. Let us, then, give comfort, as God gives us opportunity.—H. Clay Trumbull.

God Comforts Us that we May Be Able to Comfort Others

Mrs. Gardner's pastor asked her to teach a sewing class. She had recently lost her husband, and in her great sorrow refused to be comforted. "It is only the happy people who can teach," she told him (in a story in The Youth's Companion). "There is Mrs. Romney with her class—cheerful, useful, loving and being loved. Why shouldn't she be happy with husband and children and all that wealth can buy? I had only my husband, and now—"

"Have you never heard of little Phyllis?" the clergyman interrupted gently.

"The baby that died of a strange spinal disease?" queried Mrs. Gardner without interest. "But she was only a few months old and she has four beautiful children now."

"Very true," agreed the minister, "but is it for their sake that Mrs. Romney sends her car filled with flowers every Saturday morning to the children's hospital? When she writes a check to cover the expenses of some tiny invalid, is she thinking of her rosy-cheeked boys and girls or of that frail little baby that—"

"Don't, please!" begged the woman. "I didn't understand. But how can she be so happy?"

"Happiness has been given her as a reward for the health and joy she has brought to hundreds of children in the city," was the unhesitating reply.

"But her case is unlike mine," Mrs. Gardner pleaded. "Without money she, too, would be helpless."

"Have you noticed the woman in black who sits across the aisle from you in church?" the pastor asked.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Gardner wonderingly. "I think of her as my neighbor with the tranquil face. Who is she?"

"The wife of a seaman who lost his life in a steamboat disaster thirty years ago. She lives alone in four tiny rooms, but there is seldom a Sunday or a holiday when some homesick sailor lad is not welcomed to her home. Only last spring she nursed one of them through a long illness. It is all she can do in memory of her Jack, but God requires no more. He has given her an abiding joy."

Mrs. Gardner glanced about her—at the warm rugs, the piano, the well-filled bookcase. Neither poverty nor riches was her lot. "I can't understand it—yet," she began slowly, "but if you still believe that I can interest your club girls in a sewing class I am willing to meet the committee next week. But I shall have to lean on your faith for a while."

"And on the everlasting arms," added the minister, with a prayer of thanksgiving in his heart.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The Book of Isaiah.

2. Israel in exile. See chapters 2-4 of the second book of Isaiah, The Expositor's Bible.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What various interpretations have been given of the Servant of Jehovah? 2. How did the experiences of Christ correspond to the picture of Fifty-third Isaiah? 3. What sort of Messiah did the Jews of Christ's time expect? 4. Contrast their idea with that of our lesson text.

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

THE GOSPEL OF COMFORT

Beginning the Lesson

In a summer long gone by, a father sat by the sick-bed of his little daughter. Her small white hand was nestled in his, and they said little to each other, for she was to be kept quiet. Few words were needed between them; just to hold hands, and to be close together was all the happiness she asked for.

With a gentle good-bye pressure of the hand, her father rose. "Must you go?" she asked. "Won't you read me a little from the Bible first?" He reached the book and sat down again. "Open it anywhere, father," she said, "just by chance." The book opened at the fortieth chapter of Isaiah. He glanced at her in doubt for a moment. She could not possibly understand this chapter, and how could he now explain it to her? After all, did it matter if she did not understand? So he began to read that great prophecy of the Voice crying in the wilderness, and of the coming of the Lord.

She asked him to read again the seventh and eighth verses, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth." "I like the sound of that," she said. "Doesn't it make you see the high grass shining and the flowers in it? Don't you remember those fields, father, below Hockridge last summer—how crimson they were with sorrel? And the winds came over the ridge, and ran down the field like a lot of fairy children, I thought, because we could not see them; or perhaps they were fairy sheep; but, of course, really it was 'the spirit of the Lord' blowing upon it. Perhaps it is all like that now. We must go and see, when I get up."

At the eleventh verse, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd," "Isn't that lovely, father?" she asked. "'Gather the lambs with his arm'; he won't grab them roughly, but just put his arm about them, and draw them in to his bosom. How vexed St. Francis was with those rough men who tied the lambs' feet together and carried them hanging from a staff! That will do, father. It is all lovely to think about."

Before a week had gone by, the little daughter was laid in her grave. When all was over, the father went out alone in dumb sorrow, longing for desolate places. For hours he walked on, unconscious of where he was going, but surely a little hand guided him. When the sun was low, he suddenly saw before him the fields sloping up to Hockridge—the enchanted fields of last July, the bloom of the shining grass powdered with the bright gold of buttercups and flushed blood-red with the wonderful flowering sorrel. A breath of wind came over the ridge, and ran down the field, like fairy sheep, or was it like invisible children? One of them came almost to where he stood and stopped abruptly, as if it were gazing at him.

A year ago she was by his side looking at this very thing. A week ago she was saying, "Of course, really it was the spirit of the Lord blowing upon it," and "he will just put his arm about them, and draw them in to his bosom."

The man's eyes filled with tears, but the words had drawn the dumb, aching sorrow out of his heart. "His bosom!" he said; "thank God!"—William Canton, in The Bible in the World.

Comfort Ye

"She doesn't know us," one of the older sisters exclaimed to Laurie despairingly. "She doesn't look like my Beth, and there's nobody to help us bear it; mother and father both gone, and God seems so far away I can't find him."

Laurie was only a boy. Serious illness and such grief were new to him, but his heart was full of sympathy, and he grasped Jo's hand. "I'm here," he said reassuringly. "Hold on to me, Jo, dear!"

Readers of Miss Alcott's Little Women will remember the pathetic scene and perhaps the author's sage reflection that follows: "She could not speak, but she did 'hold on,' and the warm grasp of the friendly human hand comforted her sore heart and seemed to lead her nearer to the Divine Arm, which alone could uphold her in her trouble."

All Christian teaching is in essence an effort to interpret God to dull or careless or groping minds. What we too often overlook is that our acts are far more convincing interpreters than our words. What we do in disinterested kindness of heart and under the inspiration of love—our sacrifices, or cheerful self-denials, our sympathetic ministries—may seem discouragingly inadequate to meet the need to which they respond, but quite apart from what they themselves accomplish they bring the needy heart nearer the Great Helper, whose name is Love.—The Youth's Companion.

The Gospel of Comfort

The sources of joy are many. They are rooted in all of our five senses, and ministered to by countless objects of beauty and harmony in the world without. For them the seven notes of the octave find expression in untutored nature and in the gifts of skilled musicians. Sight and sound and touch and taste and perfume all open gateways to the home of joy within the mind of man.

But the sources of comfort are few. There are not many ways in which consolation makes it approach to human life. And all men need comfort. Bright as is the world, the very shining of its sun produces shadows, and the stalk that bears roses gives bleeding fingers to him who plucks them. He who never needs comfort must die young. No life continues long without an experience of sorrow.

And when sorrow comes, then comes also the discovery that, while the sources of comfort are not many, they are adequate and precious.

First is the comfort of happy memory. No grief or misfortune can take away the joys that have entered permanently into our character.

Then, in time of need, is found the comfort of work, and of the friendship that remains. There is always some one still who needs us and whom we need. Whatever our losses, we have never yet lost all.

Then we discover the comfort of sympathy. It has been said a thousand, or perhaps a million, times that "mere words" cannot assuage grief, and every time it is said untruthfully. Words that are fitly spoken, out of a sincere heart and a kindred experience, are among the most precious, as they are among the most costly, of all comforts.

"The word we had not sense to speak,
Who knows how grandly it had rung?"

But the basis of all abiding comfort is faith in a loving and fatherly God. For this there can be no substitute, and nothing can take away the strength which it gives. "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," said the disciples in the hour of their bewilderment, and grief. Faith in a loving God, the God of all comfort, is the basis of all reasonable consolation. And the world needs it all the time.—The Youth's Companion.

Sentence Sermons

How soon a smile of God can change the world!—Browning.

I do not believe that there is any happiness in the world, any real happiness, that does not find its root in a loving, simple trust in God as our Father and our Friend; One who is so strong that no need of our life can ever be greater than his capacity to help.—Robert E. Speer.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What reference to this chapter is there in the first part of The Acts? (Acts 8.) 2. What is meant by "the arm of Jehovah," verse 1? 3. What does "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him" mean? 4. Is it heroic to say nothing when unjustly accused? 5. Commit to memory verses 4-6.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT OF JEHOVAH

GOLDEN TEXT: With his stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53.5

LESSON Isaiah 52.13 to 53.12 **DEVOTIONAL READING** Revelation 5.9-14

ISAIAH 53.1 Who hath believed our message? and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who *among them* considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke *was due?* 9 And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by the knowledge of himself shall my righteous servant justify many; and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH. Who is meant by the term? In the words of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8.34), "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other?" Philip, to whom the eunuch spoke, immediately took up the passage which we study today, and from it preached Christ.

Incidental allusions to the Servant of Jehovah are scattered throughout the second part of the Book of Isaiah, but the main passages are these: 41.8-20; 42.1-7, 18-25; 43.5-10; 49.1-9; 50.4-10; 52.13 to 53.12. What was the conception in the mind of the prophet? Was the Servant a personification, or a person? If a personification, was he the Israelitish nation as a whole, or the best portion of that nation—the righteous nucleus? The exiles in Babylon, or that part who remained loyal to Jehovah throughout all the trials of the exile and thus kept alive the true religion? If a person, was he ideal, or real? A prophet, or Hezekiah, or Jehoiachim? Or was he one still to come, the promised Messiah? Each of these interpretations are ably defended by scholars.

From a chapter in Dr. George Adam Smith's Book of Isaiah, I condense these statements: God set apart for his chief service upon earth, not an individual nor a group of individuals, but a whole nation in its national capacity. We have heard the whole nation plainly called by Jeremiah (30.10) and Ezekiel (37.25), "the Servant of Jehovah." It is in this sense that in Isaiah the title is first used, in 41.8; 44.1; 48.20. Very soon the Servant is sketched as something less than the actual nation. A certain ideal of the people fills the prophet's mind—the better portion of Israel. By chapter forty-nine the Servant of Jehovah is a personification of the true effective Israel as distinguished from the mass of the nation—a personification, but not yet a person. In chapter 50 it has become more difficult to distinguish the Servant from an actual person. In 52.13 to 53.12 there are very strong reasons, both in the text itself and in the analogy of other prophecy, to suppose that the portrait of an individual is intended. None but prejudiced Jews have denied that this great prophecy, known as the Fifty-third of Isaiah, was fulfilled in one Person, Jesus of Nazareth, and achieved in all its details by him alone. But, on the other hand, it must be pointed out that Christ's personal fulfillment of it does not necessarily imply that our prophet wrote it of a Person. Christ is elsewhere represented as realizing in his Person and work statements which, as they were first

spoken, could only refer to Israel, the nation. Matthew, for instance, applies to Jesus a text which Hosea wrote primarily of the whole Jewish people: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son."

Dr. Smith follows the history of Israel from the prophet to the Christ. He finds the nation, as promised, restored to its own land, and pursuing through the centuries its own life. He finds within the nation what the prophet looked for—an elect and effective portion, with the conscience of a national service to the world, but looking for the achievement of this to such an Individual Servant as the prophet seemed ultimately to foreshadow. At last he sees emerge One with the sense that he alone is responsible and able for it. And this One Israelite not only in his own person exhibits a character and achieves a work that illustrates and far excels our prophet's highest imaginations, but also becomes, to a new Israel infinitely more numerous than the old, the conscience and inspiration of their collective fulfillment of the ideal. In the New Testament we see the most perfect reflection of the Servant of the Lord. Jesus Christ is the perfect fulfillment and illustration.

"The very name 'servant' sets up a standard of life for individuals and nations. Those who would be great must become the servants of all. Jesus Christ is the only perfect illustration of altruism. Selfishness is the curse of the world. Christ brought help because he was the perfect Servant of Jehovah, consecrated to unselfish service. And servantship and service must characterize every life that ministers to the health and strength of humanity" (John T. McFarland).

II. THE LATER EXALTATION OF THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH, 52.13-15. In these last three verses of the fifty-second chapter of Isaiah, God is represented as the Speaker. (In 53.11, 12, he again speaks.) Behold, he exclaims, my Servant, he who executes my will, shall deal so wisely as finally to be exalted. But just as many were astonished, because they could not understand his sufferings, his visage and form disfigured by disease; so when he is exalted he shall startle many nations, kings shall be silent with surprise when he is really known and understood. ("The word *sprinkle* is difficult and obscure and perhaps not original. The Greek version reads 'many nations will marvel at him.'")

III. THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH A MAN OF SORROW, verses 1-3. The prophet is now the speaker. "Whenever a 'we' is suddenly introduced into a prophecy, it is always Isaiah that speaks, since the prophet takes the nation along with himself" (Delitzsch). Who hath believed our message, and to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? He refers seemingly to the revelation which he has made in the past, the substance of 42.1-4; 49.1-6; 50.4-9. "The tenses in verses 1-3 are past (prophetic perfect), the future being viewed as already accomplished. The implied answer to the question is 'No one'" (Dummelow). The "arm of Jehovah" is a figure of speech for the work of Jehovah; the sending of the Servant is his work.

For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. "Not like a stately tree, but like a lowly plant, struggling in arid ground."

"There is nothing in Christ's surroundings, in the obscurity of his earthly origin, in the lowliness of his early associations, or in the recovery of his racial inheritance to account for his wisdom, his words, or his width of vision. It is not surprising that in the day when prophecy was fulfilled in himself, the men who knew him best should say, 'Whence hath this man such knowledge?' 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?'" (J. Stuart Holden).

He hath no form nor comeliness, none of the external things which men admire; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

"The world knows not its greatest men; but once it knew the greatest of all. And it is equally true that multitudes today fail to recognize the majesty and grace of Jesus Christ. His great character does not appeal to them; they are not charmed by his career of mercy; his gracious doctrine elicits no sympathetic response; they do not see his beauty nor feel his preciousness" (W. L. Watkinson).

He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. "What an Iliad of woes is condensed into these words!" And as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not. Men turned

their faces away from him with loathing. Many see in these words a suggestion of leprosy, and refer to Job. 17.6.

"These verses are the confession, in general language, of a universal human habit—the habit of letting the eye cheat the heart and conscience, of allowing the aspect of suffering to blind us to its meaning; of forgetting in our sense of the ugliness and helplessness of pain, that it has a motive, a future and a God" (George Adam Smith).

IV. THE VICARIOUS SUFFERING OF THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH, 53.4-6. It has been the burdens of others, not his own, that the Servant has suffered; yet we thought that he was stricken, smitten and afflicted by the hand of God because of his own sins, whereas his sufferings were caused by the burden of others that he was carrying—our transgressions, our iniquities. In the ancient world a great sufferer was thought to be a great sinner. Recall how the friends of Job repeatedly declared or hinted that his grievous sufferings were sent because of some hidden sin of his in the past; and how Jesus protested against the assertion that the men on whom a tower fell were sinners more than most men, Lk. 13.1-5.

The chastisement of our peace (which procured our peace) was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. In the most wonderful way it has become clear to the prophet that the suffering of God's Servant is to make possible men's peace with God. We have wandered like sheep, we have turned every one to his own way, his sinful way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the punishment due to us for our iniquity. "This is the clearest and most definite statement of the fact that in some great and adequate way the sufferer is able to assume the weight of responsibility for men's sins" (Lynn Harold Hough).

"The speakers confess that they knew that the Servant's suffering was both vicarious and redemptive. At first they were bewildered by the Servant's suffering; then they thought it contemptible, thus passing upon it an intellectual judgment; then, forced to seek a moral reason for it, they accounted it as penal and due to the Servant for his own sins; then they recognized that its penalty was vicarious, that the Servant was suffering for them; and finally, they knew that it was redemptive, the means of their own healing and peace" (George Adam Smith).

"I am not able to give an account to myself of the way in which Christ's death becomes the basis of my salvation; but I see the law of vicariousness operative everywhere, and why should I not believe in Calvary as its supreme illustration? It satisfies my conscience; it wins my heart; it becomes a sublime law for my own life that I shall suffer for others. Living the vicarious life, I shall perhaps the better understand the doctrine of vicariousness, the central doctrine of the New Testament" (W. L. Watkinson).

V. THE SORROW AND DEATH OF THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH, 53.7-9. Many scholars think these verses are the Voice of the Lord, reaffirming the conclusions reached by the penitent people. He bore his sufferings with great meekness. He was silent under his oppression. Like a lamb led to the slaughter, like a sheep before its shearers, he uttered no word of complaint. "Silence under suffering is a strange thing in the Old Testament—a thing absolutely new. No other Old Testament personage could stay dumb under pain, but immediately broke into one of two voices—voice of guilt or voice of doubt."

"The 8th verse is extremely obscure and ambiguous, and it would serve no good purpose to enumerate the many interpretations which have been hazarded. Suffice it to say that out of the obscurity there emerges clearly enough the fact that the Servant died by an act of injustice. We may provisionally accept this interpretation: debarred from justice he was taken away (that is, to death); and, as for his fate, who gave it a thought? for he was cut off out of the land of the living. And again we are reminded that it was not for his own sin, but for the transgressions of others, the guilty people, that he was thus stricken. Further, as he suffered a violent death, so he was dishonored with a felon's burial (the 'sick' in verse 9 are practically equal to the wicked, those who have become sick by evil doing; some even read here the word 'evil-doers'). And all this violence and dishonor fell upon one who had been gentle, true, and stainless" (John E. McFadyen).

"Did the Great Unknown, looking through the centuries, get some glimpse of Calvary, of the blood-stained face, and of the thorn-crowned brow, or did he only learn from the anguish of the past that all victory comes through

battle and all salvation through suffering? Did he only see the general truth which too many men have failed to see, even though it is focused and centralized historically in Jesus of Nazareth? I do not know. Only this I know: that nowhere, not even by Paul, is that truth more splendidly illustrated than in this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and nowhere has it such divine illustration as in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ" (Lyman Abbott).

VI. THE TRIUMPH AND GLORY OF THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH, verses 10-12. It pleased Jehovah to bruise him. This does not mean that it gave God pleasure to afflict him, but that his suffering was a part of God's plan; God willed it for the sake of what it accomplished. "His death was no mere martyrdom or miscarriage of human justice; in God's intent and purpose, but also by its own voluntary offering, it was an expiatory sacrifice" (George Adam Smith). He shall see his seed, the increase of his followers, and the pleasure, the purpose, of Jehovah shall prosper in his hand, shall triumph through him. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied. When the great purpose of his suffering and death is realized, he will be content. By the knowledge of himself, that is, "by the knowledge of God which he possesses and will impart to others, he will bring justification to many, by bearing their iniquities."

"With necessary self-abnegation and complete abasement and shame, I am constrained to say: Was it worth while? That is, was man worth it? Am I then worth it? The answer is in these words: 'He shall be satisfied!' Then I have but one thing to say, and it is this:

> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my life, my soul, my all" (G. Campbell Morgan).

"The now exalted Servant takes his place among the great, the strong and the victorious (to 'divide the spoil' is a figure for victory); and this exaltation is at once the result and the reward of his unmerited sufferings; it is his 'because he has poured out his soul,' that is, his life-blood, for the transgressors or rebels. At the end of the poem, we are reminded, as in verse 4, that men interpreted his sufferings falsely, they numbered him with the transgressors whereas it was their sins, and not his own, that he bore" (J. E. McFadyen).

"The whole passage clearly comes out of a life stirred to its depths by a consciousness of sin and a sense of the need that something shall be done about sin. It is an outburst of joyful confidence that a bearer of sin will be provided, that through unspeakable suffering on the part of one perfectly innocent—God's own Servant—a way of escape and a way of peace will be found. It does not attempt to give a philosophy of vicarious suffering. But it is the deepest expression in literature of the need of vicarious suffering" (Lynn Harold Hough).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

So shall he sprinkle many nations, 52.15. The reference is to the purification of "the unclean" before engaging in worship: the water for impurity hath not been sprinkled upon him, he is unclean, Num. 19.20.

Kings shall shut their mouths, 52.15. The Talmud has a dialogue between a blind rabbi and a Sadducee which expresses the thought that awe is shown by silence. They were waiting for a royal procession. There was a great uproar as the first part of the procession passed, and the Sadducee said, "Here is the king." The blind rabbi disagreed with him. "Here is the king," again the Sadducee declared as a second division passed, and again the rabbi said it could not be. Then a third division passed in silence, and this time the blind rabbi declared, "Here is the king." "How do you know?" questioned the Sadducee. "Because," answered the rabbi, "the kingdom of earth is like the kingdom of heaven."

To whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed? 53.1. To reveal the arm, to make bare the arm, are figures of speech that mean to show one's power, to make ready for work. There is a reference in these figures to the fact that the loose sleeves of both outer and inner garment of the oriental costume can be quickly pushed upward and the arm bared, made free for action.

All we like sheep have gone astray, 53.6. It is of interest in this connection to recall the oriental law that a sheep that has strayed to an enemy must be ransomed.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

We study today one of the greatest passages in the Old Testament, the last one dealing with the Servant of Jehovah. The background is the same as in our lesson for last week. Read again The Historical Background for that lesson.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Few chapters in the Bible have given rise to as much discussion as the one which we study today. In only a few classes need much time be given to the various interpretations of the Servant of Jehovah. The chapter has always been associated with the character and life of Jesus Christ and in him only do we find the embodiment of the prophecy. Whether or not we rightly understand what were the first intention and application of these words in the prophet's own mind, we rightly know that his picture of God's unique Servant foreshadows for us God's only begotten Son.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE SUFFERING SAVIOR

Beginning the Lesson

There is a familiar diagram in books on optics and perspective, which all of you have seen. [Trace it on the board as you describe it.] Here is the eye and from the eye diverging lines are drawn. Here not far from the eye they enclose a very small figure of a man. The lines are prolonged farther, and as they widen out there is here a much larger sized man. The prophet whose words we are studying had a mountaintop vision: his eyes could look far into the future and see a coming Redeemer for Israel and for all nations: it was no small figure close to the eyes that he saw, but one far off, of gigantic proportions. We may not know just what that figure meant to him, in his own mind, when he described it in the words of fifty-third Isaiah, one of the most wonderful passages in all literature. But there is no doubt of what it means to us, who can compare with that dimly outlined figure the glorious figure of him who healed many that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases."

The Servant of Jehovah

Very clearly Dr. Lynn Harold Hough interprets the prophet's thought and its realization. "The prophet meant a person, a great unique, real person, who would bear men's sins, and through whom they would find peace. As with the other prophets in other prophecies, he saw the fact, but the time was not revealed to him. He doubtless supposed the great Servant was to appear at the restoration. So other prophets thought the great consummation at hand in their own time. It is clear that again and again Jehovah gave the prophets glowing hopes, without revealing to them anything about the time when they should be realized. So it was with this prophet, and this accounts for his connecting the Servant with the restoration from exile. But the great fact was the revelation of a sin-bearer to come. Prophecy never touched profounder depths than when this exile prophet had flashed upon him the conception of a great sufferer who should bear his people's sins.

"Centuries passed. In the fulness of time Christ was born. His life was lived, his words were spoken; then came Calvary. And as through the ages since men with new hope and life which he has given have sought to understand his death, in proportion to the depth of their understanding they have come closer to the explanation this Hebrew prophet had given so long before. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.' God had whispered to the prophet one of his great secrets, and the prophet told it to the world."

Vicarious Suffering a Redemptive Force

Substitutive suffering is a great living fact of human experience. In every nation, in every family, the innocent suffer for the guilty. Vicarious suffering is not arbitrary nor accidental; it comes with our growth; it is part of the very nature of things. It is that part of the service of man to which we daily grow more aware. Vicarious suffering is a service—service for God. It proves a power where every other moral force has failed. By it men are redeemed, on whom justice and their proper punishment have been able to effect nothing. Why this is so, is very intelligible. We awaken to the guilt and heinousness of our sin when it reaches and

implicates lives which were not partners with us in it. Moreover, while a man's punishment is apt to give him an excuse for saying, I have expiated my sin myself, and so to leave him self-satisfied and with nothing for which to be grateful or obliged to a higher will; or while it may make him reckless or plunge him into despair; so, on the contrary, when he recognizes that others feel the pain of his sin and have come under its weight, then shame is quickly born within him, and pity and every other passion that can melt a hard heart. If, moreover, the others who bear his sin do so voluntarily and for love's sake, then how quickly on the back of shame and pity does gratitude rise, and the sense of debt and of constraint to their will! For all these very intelligible reasons, vicarious suffering has been a powerful redemptive force in the experience of the race.—George Adam Smith, in The Book of Isaiah.

What the Man of Sorrows Did for Us

The doctrine of a substitutional atonement is popularly expressed by the lines:

"Jesus died and paid it all,
All the debt I owe."

Apparently it never occurs to the congregations that sing the verse that they are denying absolutely that God the heavenly Father ever forgives his children's sins. For if the debt is paid, it is not forgiven. The notion that Jesus suffers the penalty of our sins, that the innocent is punished for the wrong-doing of the guilty, I repudiate absolutely.

Jesus is not represented in the Bible as punished in the place of the sinner; he is not represented as saving sinners from their punishment. He is called Jesus because he saves us from our sins, not from our punishment. On him is laid the iniquity, not the penalty of us all. By his stripes we are healed, not excused. In the cup which he passes to his disciples at the Last Supper is symbolized his blood shed for many for the remission of sins, not of penalties. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins, not lets us off from all punishment.

When Thomas Mott Osborne goes to Auburn State Prison and voluntarily shares the experiences of the prisoners—their cells, their menial offices, their inadequate food, their unsanitary conditions, and even their punishment cells—it is not that he may set them free from prison. He suffers with them, but he does not suffer in their stead. He shares their experiences that he may impart to them his experiences; without having committed their offense, he shares with them their punishment, that he may inspire in them an aspiration to live an honest life and a hope and purpose so to do. About to leave the prison, he says to his partner in the prison work:

"Some time, Jack, some day in the future when the right time has come, you can count upon me to go to the Governor for you."

"At this suggestion of a pardon," he writes, "I expect to get from Jack a quick word of gratitude, some sort of indication that he is conscious of having attained his first step toward freedom, the interest of a friend, at least, of an application for pardon.

"To my surprise he turns to me almost roughly. 'Put that right out of your mind, Tom,' he says. 'Don't you bother your head about that one single minute. I am ready to stay behind these walls all my life if I can help you and the Commission bring about some of these reforms you have in mind. That's all I want.'"

This is a true symbol of a Christian experience. Because Jesus Christ has come into life and shared with humanity its experiences of trial, temptation, and suffering; because he has known the handicap of poverty, the bitterness of misunderstanding by his pupils, desertion by his friends, and execration by his enemies; because he has experienced the disappointment of a noble ambition, the physical pains of a lingering and torturing death, and the more awful pangs of a broken heart; and because we, his pupils and followers, believe that he is still here, an unseen though not unrealized Presence, we wish to stay as long as we may and do what little we can to bring about some of the reforms he has in mind. That's all we want.

Jesus Christ did not suffer and die that we might escape suffering and death. We still suffer, we still die, and he forewarned his disciples that they must bear with him the burdens which he bore. He suffered not to appease God's wrath and induce him to forgive, nor to satisfy God's law and enable him to forgive. He came into life as Thomas Mott Osborne went into Auburn State Prison, not that he might obtain for us a pardon, but that he might inspire in us his life by sharing with

us our life. This is what the forgiveness of sins means. This is what Paul means by: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—Condensed from an Article in The Outlook, by Lyman Abbott.

To Whom the Pre-eminence Is Due

When Cyrus took captive the king of Armenia and Tigranes, his son, with their wives and families, and carried them off to his capital, for several days they lay under sentence of death, and then, at last, on pledge of relinquishing all their claims and possessions, he set them free and let them return to their own land. It is said that on the way back they fell to discussing among themselves the glory of the court of the great conqueror, and one spoke of the splendid jewels, and another spoke of the magnanimity of the king, and, at last, Tigranes turned to his wife, who had been silent during the discussion, and said to her, "And what didst thou think of Cyrus?" "In truth," replied she, "I never saw him." "Where were thine eyes?" said he. "I fixed them," said she, "upon him"—referring to an offer that Tigranes had made—"whom I heard in my presence offer to lay down his life for me." She had eyes for none other than him. I wish I had eyes for none other than Christ, that in a real sense he might have with me in all things the pre-eminence. Let us give it to him now.—Robert E. Speer, in The Master of the Heart.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The problem of the Servant of Jehovah.

2. The problem of suffering.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

Study the entire 34th chapter of Second Chronicles and also Second Kings 22.1 to 23.30. How was the Book of the Law lost and forgotten? What was the Book of the Law? What was the result of finding it? What is meant by "stand to it," verse 32? How may the Bible be lost today? Do you really possess your Bible?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

WHAT OUR SALVATION COST

Beginning the Lesson

After the death of Jesus his disciples carried on his work. Seven deacons, you remember, were appointed in the Church at Jerusalem to help the disciples. Do you recall the name of one of them? One day he (Philip) was walking along the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza when he met an Ethiopian General who had been to Jerusalem to worship and was returning. The great man was reading as he rode along in his chariot. Do you remember what it was that he was reading? Let us turn to it in the Book of Acts, eighth chapter, and read the thirty-second and thirty-third verses. What was it Philip asked as he ran to him, verse thirty? And what did the Ethiopian answer? No wonder the Ethiopian, a foreigner, could not understand this prophecy of Isaiah without help. Philip joined him in the chariot and then the Ethiopian asked, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other?" Then Phillip began with his scripture and preached unto him Jesus. And now we will take this same prophecy from Isaiah, and see how it was fulfilled by Jesus.

The Great Sacrifice Pictured by Art

The walls of the Boston Public Library are decorated with wonderful paintings by Sargent. In one of them there is the majestic figure of Christ stretched upon the cross: the blood dripping from the pierced hands is being caught in chalices held by Adam kneeling on one side and Eve kneeling on the other. A great robe enshrouds all three, picturing the thought of the community of Nature between Christ on the cross and our humanity represented by Adam and Eve. The Latin legend written over the cross in great letters means, "The sins of the world are remitted." The marvelous painting tells better than words can that the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

What All Can Understand

A missionary went to a town in Mesopotamia to labor among the Syrians, Mohammedans, and others there; thirteen long years he toiled among them before he had

a single convert. "Your words sound well," they told him, "but we cannot understand them. Why should you come to us with these words? Why are you not content to leave us as we were?" Then came the cholera. Those who could, fled, leaving the sick to die uncared for. The missionary stayed. He went into home after home and cared for the stricken ones, till at last, his life utterly spent with weariness, he himself succumbed to the disease. Those whom he had saved bore his body without the city wall and tenderly buried it.

Long afterwards another missionary came to that city. He expected to find the work of his predecessor forgotten, but nine miles out from the city the people met him with great joy. They took him to a grove outside the city and showed him a grave. "This is the grave of the man who died for us," they told him. They understood now the words the missionary had spoken, and they built a fine large stone church and dedicated it to his memory and to the service of the God whom he served.

Jesus lived and labored among men, and comparatively few there were who understood his teachings. And then he gave his life for them upon the cross, and marvelous was the growth in numbers of his followers. He had died for their sins. How his death was an atonement, an at-one-ment, reconciling them to God, they could perhaps not understand, but the sacrifice of the cross they could see, and the power of the cross they could feel, for being lifted up he drew all men unto him.

How the Great Sacrifice Should Be Accepted

There is a story told by Dr. Doddridge. During his Northampton ministry an Irishman was convicted of sheep stealing, and, according to the cruel custom of the time, condemned to death. Dr. Doddridge did everything he could to save him, but in vain. When the man was being driven in the death-cart to the place of execution, he asked that they should stop at Dr. Doddridge's house, and they did. Then he said: "Dr. Doddridge, every drop of my blood loves you, every vein of my heart loves you, because you tried to save me." And how shall we carry ourselves to Christ, who died and lives to save us? Say to him: "Shall I not love thee back again for all the miracle of divine love thou hast brought to me?" For he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.—W. Robertson Nicoll, in British Weekly.

What Rag and Dan Thought

Mrs. Mason had two street Arabs in her mission Sunday School class, called Rag and Dan. One Sunday she was teaching them our lesson of today, and explaining to them that Jesus willingly gave up his life as a ransom for the sins of the whole world. "Don't believe it!" suddenly exclaimed Rag. "Now look-a-here!" he continued earnestly. "Me'n Dan don't believe no such thing as that. It's a fake, that's wot it is. 'Tain't accordin' to reason for anybody to act that way. You go down Fourth Street, and you hit a feller over the head, and he'll give you one back, he will for sure, if he's big enough. But you say this Man you're talkin' about could do anything he wanted to do; and yet he let them galoots around him get him into a corner and do him up! Well, I guess not!" "Not much!" echoed Dan.

That Sunday and for many Sundays afterward Mrs. Mason taught her boys about the life and motives and divinity of Jesus, till conviction dawned in their hearts. "Is this all straight, teacher? Are you sure you ain't givin' us no bluff?" asked Rag. "Yes, Rag, I'm sure. It's no bluff, it's straight." "Wot d'you think of it, Dan?" he then questioned his follower. "I tell you, Rag, it's straight goods, just as she says," Dan replied. "She's never went back on us yet, an' you bet she ain't going back on us now. I believe it."

"Yes, I guess it must be straight," slowly admitted Rag, and then with sudden energy, he exclaimed, "But say, if he done all that for a fellow, how a fellow ought to love him!"

Sentence Sermons

Whosoever would be great among you shall be your servant.—Jesus.

A life on service bent,
  A life for love laid down,
It is the life for others spent,
  Which God will crown.—Allenson.

LESSON V—MAY 5

WHAT HILKIAH FOUND IN THE TEMPLE

GOLDEN TEXT: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And light unto my path. Psalm 119.105

LESSON 2 Chronicles 34.1-33 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 19.7-14

2 CHRONICLES 34.14 And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of Jehovah, Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah *given* by Moses. 15 And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. 16 And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and moreover brought back word to the king, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they are doing.

29 Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30 And the king went up to the house of Jehovah, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, both great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of Jehovah. 31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before Jehovah, to walk after Jehovah, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. 32 And he caused all that were found in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *to it*. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. 33 And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were found in Israel to serve, even to serve Jehovah their God. All his days they departed not from following Jehovah, the God of their fathers.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. JOSIAH'S EARLY REFORM MEASURES, verses 1-7. Josiah became king of Judah when eight years of age, and during his reign of thirty-one years he "wholly followed the Lord." At sixteen years of age his loyalty to God was very marked. At twenty he began his active work of reforming his kingdom: he cleared out all the idols, destroyed the idolatrous places of worship, broke up the graven images, pounded them to dust and scattered the dust upon the graves of idolaters, and in his zeal even dug up the bones of the priests of Baal and burned them upon the Baal altars. These reform measures he carried out also in the now desolate cities of Northern Israel. For Josiah's place in the history of Judah, see The Historical Background.

II. THE TEMPLE REPAIRS WHICH LED TO THE FINDING OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW, verses 8-13. When twenty-six years of age, Josiah turned his attention to the ruined temple and had it repaired. He placed in charge of the work the governor of Jerusalem, the official secretary and the official historian. They handed over to Hilkiah, the high priest, the money which the people brought to the temple and gave to the Levites who were appointed to receive it. The overseers were Levites; other Levites encouraged the workmen with music; yet other Levites were scribes and officers and porters. The work was done faithfully and progressed rapidly.

III. THE FINDING OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW, verses 14-16. During the work upon the temple, Hilkiah, the priest, found the book of the law of Jehovah given by Moses. This is believed to have been the legal portions (chapters twelve to twenty-six and chapter twenty-eight) of our Book of Deuteronomy, which calls itself "The Book of the Law" and also "The Book of the Covenant." Some scholars believe that this had long been known, but had been forgotten during the idolatrous reigns of Manasseh and Amon, and Hilkiah found the copy in the temple and read it to Josiah for the first time. Others hold that it was "a new and enlarged edition of the Book of the Covenant prepared for the needs of the times, and brought forth now because Josiah was a righteous king and would enforce its decrees." Dr. George Adam Smith points out that it is precisely from this time onward that the style and phraseology which are characteristic of Deuteronomy begin to affect the literature of Israel.

In Dt. 31.9, 26, Moses is said to have written the Law and to have delivered it to the priests. Yet there are evidences in the book that certain portions of it were added by a writer subsequent to Moses, such as the account of Moses' death,

the references to "beyond Jordan" for the eastern side of the river which could be used only by one living east of the river, and to boundary marks which had been set up by "those of olden time." Deuteronomy seems to contain laws and customs, not of a single lifetime, but developed by many generations of God-inspired men, expressed in the form of valedictory orations of the great law-giver.

Hilkiah told Shaphan the scribe of the discovery. The word *scribe* means literally *man of books;* a scribe was editor and interpreter as well as copyist. The text says that "Hilkiah answered and said": no question is recorded, but this word "answered" is often used when the answer is to unexpressed thoughts. We may think of Shaphan the scribe as wondering what the book could be, and of Hilkiah as declaring, It is the book of the law. Shaphan carried the book to the king.

"Up! explorers, with pick and spade, pursue your investigations in ancient lands that bricks and monuments may confirm, as thus far they have done, God's Holy Word. Up! scholars, search, explore, and translate documents that verify the sources of our faith" (George C. Lorimer).

IV. THE EFFECT UPON JOSIAH OF THE READING OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW, verses 17-21. After telling the king that the work upon the temple was progressing well, the money having been given to the overseers and the workmen put at work, Shaphan spoke about the newly discovered book and read it aloud (the entire roll, according to 2 K. 22.10). On hearing the words the king rent his robes in token of his troubled mind, "For," he said, "great is God's wrath against us, because our fathers have not done as this book commands." If we would see the effect the book must have had upon the susceptible soul of Josiah, we are advised to read chapters 22-26 of Deuteronomy ourselves with Josiah and his times in mind. The book contains explicit directions as to worship and conduct, and the penalty of national disobedience decreed was the loss of home and country. "For many generations warnings and precepts alike had been neglected, and when the day of doom should come, the sins of the fathers also would be visited upon the children. Could the doom be averted by speedy and complete obedience and penitence?"

It is not enough to read our Bible. Its messages must be heeded. Learn and observe these words found in an old Bible:

When thou readest what here is writ,
Let thy best practice second it;
So twice each precept read shall be—
First in your booke and nexte in thee.

V. THE PREDICTION OF HULDAH THE PROPHETESS, verses 22-28. Josiah chose five men to "make inquiries of the Lord" for him and his people. They went to Huldah the prophetess. Consequences could not be averted, she warned them, but assured them that because the king had humbled himself the punishment would not be meted out during his reign.

VI. THE RESULT OF THE READING OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW TO THE PEOPLE, verses 29-33. The king called a representative assembly to Jerusalem, of "the great and the small," and after having had read to them the words of the book he covenanted before them to keep God's commandments with heart and soul, and then called upon the assembly to "stand to it"—probably by a rising vote. As long as the king lived they kept this covenant. Read the fuller account of Josiah's reformations in 2 K. 23.4-20.

"The old picture of Martin Luther standing before a copy of the Scriptures carefully chained to a wall in a crypt is suggestive. The gospel then did not have free course. It was not only bound with iron, but it was sunk from the eyes of the common people in the inexplorable depth of the dead languages. The Roman Church boasts that through the Dark Ages she safely preserved the Word of God. So she did. She kept it securely locked up in an unknown tongue, and fastened by chains in her vaulted chambers. It is her boast that she kept and it is the higher boast of Protestants that they gave. Wycliff, Tyndale, Erasmus, Reuchlin, Luther, Melancthon, and the Westminster divines found the old book in the Temple, rescued it from an enormous rubbish heap of traditions and decrees, and restored it to the world through the magnificent translations which they made. Then modern history began" (George C. Lorimer).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

The book, verse 14. Our word *volume* comes from the Latin noun *volumen,* meaning a roll of writing, from the Latin verb *volvere,* to roll. Sheets of papyrus, and later of parchment, were joined together so as to form one continuous sheet, and then rolled upon a staff into a volume. The book found in the temple was such a volume or scroll. Similar scrolls are used today in Jewish synagogues.

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Hezekiah and the Assyrian Invasion

As we recalled in our lesson two weeks ago, the Kingdom of Judah had been menaced by Assyria for more than a quarter of a century. Ahaz, Hezekiah's father, had done homage to the Assyrian king, and both he and Hezekiah had been almost vassal kings of the great Assyrian Empire. In 721 B.C., the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been conquered by Sargon II, king of Assyria, and the people carried into captivity. Sargon was succeeded by Sennacherib, who reigned 705-681 B.C.

Sennacherib on his Throne

Meanwhile Hezekiah had defeated the Philistines (2 K. 18.8), had prepared Jerusalem to withstand a siege by having a conduit for water built (2 K. 20.30), and, contrary to Isaiah's counsels, had sent gifts to Egypt to gain her promise of aid in a revolt from Assyrian control. Chapters 28 to 31 of Isaiah give the prophet's rousing sermons delivered at this time: his words of warning against trusting in Egypt, whose weakness he well perceived; his assurance of the futility of revolt against Assyria, whose strength he likewise saw; and his counsels to trust in Jehovah, who alone could deliver them. His "precept upon precept" fell on dull ears, and he declared that "by men of strange lips and with another tongue" they should be made to hear.

In 701 B.C. Sennacherib's army moved westward against the rebels along the Mediterranean shore. Hezekiah yielded and sent his message to Sennacherib at Lachish: "I have offended; return from me; that which thou puttest on me will I bear." And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

To pay this tribute, Hezekiah had to empty his own treasury and that of the temple, and even to strip the portals of the sanctuary of the gold that covered them. It did not prevent Sennacherib, however, from sending a great army to lay siege to Jerusalem.

In "this day of trouble, of rebuke and contumely" Hezekiah turned to Isaiah for counsel, and Isaiah prophesied the retreat of Sennacherib.

Manasseh's Reign

Jerusalem was saved from capture by Sennacherib in Hezekiah's reign, but Judah either remained a subject kingdom of Assyria or was made one soon after Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, came to the throne. During Manasseh's reign all western Asia and Egypt were included in the great Assyrian Empire. An inscription on a triumphal stele of Esarhaddon (son of Sennacherib and king of Assyria 680-668 B.C.) gives

a list of twenty-two tributary kings who furnished building material for his new palace, and among them is "Manasseh, king of the country of Judah."

Manasseh became king of Judah at twelve years of age, and his long reign of fifty-two years was an evil one. He adopted the worship of the heathen nations about him: rebuilt the high places for worship which his father Hezekiah had labored to destroy: erected altars for the worship of false gods: worshiped the heavenly bodies: desecrated the holy temple with heathen altars: made his children suffer in the heathen rites he practised: engaged in augury, enchantments, sorcery; had friendly dealings with wizards: and even put an image of an idol, made by human hands, in the house of God: broke the covenant which God had made with his people, for its blessings depended on their keeping his laws: and led Judah astray so that they did worse than the heathen nations.

Esarhaddon

Judah's Apostasy

Throughout the history of Judah we see that the people readily followed their king. The great religious reforms of Hezekiah were quickly succeeded in his son's reign by a revival of heathen idolatry. Under Hezekiah the people had grown to a higher spiritual stature than under any previous king. Under Manasseh, his son, the process was reversed. How could the change take place so rapidly? Dr. George Adam Smith explains that "We must recall the prevalence of such forms of worship all around Judah, but especially in Samaria; and also the probable addition to the population from the Judean towns devastated by Sennacherib in which Canaanite cults still survived, from the Palestinian and Phœnician cities that had suffered by the campaigns of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, and from the great increase in trade under the Assyrian Lordship of Western Asia."

Josiah and his Counsellors

Manasseh was succeeded by his son Amon, who followed the evil practices of his father. After two years Amon was slain by his court officials, who in turn were put to death by the people, and his son Josiah was placed on the throne.

"In Josiah's youthful training is probably to be found the explanation of his remarkable character and work," writes Professor Kent. "The probabilities strongly support the conclusion that his youthful teacher was the prophet Zephaniah, whose sermons roused the nation as well as the young king. The stern, uncompromising spirit which characterizes the prophet's reform sermons is reflected in the extreme measures adopted later by Josiah. Jeremiah must have been born during the closing years of Manasseh's reign, and was therefore a contemporary of king Josiah and of the royal prophet Zephaniah. In the light of the narrative of Kings it is evident that Zephaniah and Jeremiah did not stand alone in their efforts for reform. Hilkiah, the priest, was in full sympathy with the new movement. And Josiah had gathered about him a group of able officers who supported him in his reform measures."

"The accession of the young king Josiah marks an important transition in the history of Judah. The beginning of his reign witnessed the passing of the authority of Assyria, and its close the appearance of the new world power, the Chaldeans, on the horizon of Southwestern Asia. His reign (639-608 B.C.) was during the calm between two great wars of foreign invasion."

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Dr. J. H. Jowett compares Sunday-school teachers to lamplighters. "I have stood upon the Calton Hill in Edinburgh," he says, "stood there in the darkening twilight, and gazed over the vast, vague, and shadowy city. And I have seen the lamplighter going his rounds, and I have traced his progress as he kindled lamp after lamp until the lovely Princes Street stood out an unbroken line of golden light. And I have seen a lamplighter in the spiritual kingdom pass down highways of the truth and light lamp after lamp, until to many thousands the streets have been bright with

wondrous illumination. This is the work of the Christian preacher—teacher—to hold up God's word as a light to guide fellow-pilgrims."

A teacher cannot hold up God's word as a guide unless he himself has found it a guide in his own life. Josiah heard and meditated and repented before he had the Word of the Law read to his people, and he stood in his place and solemnly promised to walk himself according to the words of the Book and to keep God's commandments before he called upon his people to serve God. If we cannot say to our pupils, "I know the Bible is inspired, because it inspires me," we cannot hold it up as a light to guide their feet.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE BIBLE IN NATIONAL LIFE

Beginning the Lesson

Professor G. C. Cell, in an article in The Methodist Review, quotes Cornill as saying: "It is inconceivable that a book so significant as the Book of the Law should have vanished, leaving no trace behind, and that, too, in an age when the richest literary life prevailed in Israel." Professor Naville, one of the leading Egyptologists of our day, shows by finds in Egypt that such a thing is not "inconceivable." He shows that from time immemorial it was the custom to bury sacred books or laws at the feet of a god or in the foundation of a temple. This custom prevailed in Egypt and Babylon. He quotes a rubric attached to a chapter of the Book of the Dead, which had been buried for generations before its discovery by the king's son while inspecting the temples of Egypt. "He brought it to the king as a marvel when he saw that it was something very mysterious which no one had ever seen or set eyes on before."

How have ancient manuscripts come down to us? How did it happen that so many of them were discovered in the very nick of time? What would have been the effect on human civilization, on literature, on science, on philosophy, had they not been discovered? The discoveries of precious manuscripts have all been, seemingly, purely accidental; what part, then, has accident played in the world's development; and what part, Divine agency?

Few books have had greater influence on the human mind than the works of Aristotle. How did they come down to us? When Aristotle was about to die, he bequeathed his manuscripts to a disciple, Theophrastus, he to one Neleus. This man, on account of war raging, hid the treasure in a cellar, and, dying soon after, forgot to tell anyone what he had done with the manuscripts. Thus for two hundred years the works of Aristotle were buried from human sight. Insects, mold and other destructive agencies had eaten into the text, but we owe it to an accident that a book collector, Ampellicon of Teos, discovered the manuscript before it was totally destroyed.

We wonder about the Book of Deuteronomy being found in the temple, do we? A French nobleman found a part of a manuscript of Livy's History on his racquet bat. The Digest of Roman Law, by the Emperor Justinian was found by soldiers in the débris of a city they had captured. Coming to later days, it is not a little surprising that the original manuscript of the Magna Charta was discovered in the hands of a tailor who was cutting it for patterns. Lady Montague's letters were found in a false bottom of an old trunk, and what a story is that of the discovery of Lord Herbert of Cherbury's autobiography; of one of the cantos of Dante's Paradise, which had fallen behind a window sill; of Milton's tractate on The Doctrines of Christianity; of Benvenuto's memoirs, and of many other writings that might be mentioned; the Codex Sinaiticus, the Logia, or sayings, of our Lord and other papyri found in Egypt by Grenfell and Harris and the Misses Lewis; the Ostraca from the dust heaps of forgotten towns which now give data for Professor Deissman's great work, Light from the Ancient East.—Adapted from an article in The Christian Advocate, by R. J. Cooke.

Josiah's Bible and Ours

It was a very tiny Bible that they had in those days. We have treasures of an incomparably richer order than any which belonged to them. We have all theirs, plus immeasurable riches; we have their tiny Bible with the incomparable riches of the New Testament. We have their commandments, and we have our Beatitudes. We have the Book of Deuteronomy, but we have the Gospel of John. We have all that they had of the Psalms, but we have also the Epistles. We have the Law,

but we have the Holy Gospel of Grace and Love. We have Moses, but we have Jesus, too.

What are we going to do with our wealth? It is like a continent compared with their parish. If that is what man did when they had a parish, what must we do with a continent?—J. H. Jowett, in a Sermon.

The Effect upon a Nation of a Lost Bible

When a nation loses its Bible, the door is opened to all disorder, socially and religiously. The story of Judah under the two reigns preceding that of Josiah is evidence of this in the Bible itself. But the evidence is abundant all along the line of history. When the divine law and standard for life have been lost or forgotten, then ignorance, idolatry, social injustice, oppression of women and children, and the like, have always flourished. It is not the less true of our own time. Our present troubles are wholly due to the neglect of the law of God. A hundred nearer reasons may be advanced, but this is the mother reason, and it must be faced before there can be any improvement.

The recovery of the Word of God in the life of a people is inevitably followed, not only by a revival of pure religion, but by revival of the great things in human life. The story of Josiah's reformation shows that when men go to the roots, there is restored honor in business, honesty in dealing with money, the revival of liberality, and chiefly the revival of the worship of God.—Editorial in The Christian.

The Effect of a Re-discovery of the Bible

Great moral and spiritual movements usually begin with a re-discovery of the Bible. It was distinctly the case with the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The finding by Luther of the Bible in the convent library was the origin of the mighty revolution he effected. The Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century commenced by Oxford students meeting for the study of the Scriptures. Many striking parallels may be found. And is it not so with the individual life? Sincere men, in whom the spiritual consciousness has by some means been awakened, go to the Bible to find it a new book, so new that it seems as if it had just been let down from heaven. It suits, it delights the inner sense as the light of the sun the eye, and we rejoice as those who no longer walk in darkness. When the spiritual life in a man is found to be dying down let him go back to the Bible; a re-discovery of its deep and marvelous truths will vitalize, animate, transform, transfigure.—W. L. Watkinson.

Some Convictions as to the Influence of the Bible upon National Life

Any individual or any institution that could take the Bible to every home in this country would do more for the country than all the armies from the beginning of our history to the present time.—Chief Justice Brewer.

The only hope of human progress is suspended on the ever growing influence of the Bible.—William H. Seward.

Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet-anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this Book we are indebted for all progress made in our true civilization and to this we must look for our guide in the future.—General Grant.

It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.—George Washington.

The Bible is the best gift God has given to man. All things most desirable for man's welfare here and hereafter are to be found portrayed in it.—Abraham Lincoln.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The Book of Deuteronomy. See Bible Dictionaries or Encyclopedias.

2. Have we lost the Bible? How many homes in our Christian land are without a Bible? How often do church members read their Bibles? How do we study the Bible? See chapters ix and x of What and Where Is God, by Richard LaRue Swain.

3. The Sunday-school is the world's greatest institution for popularizing the world's greatest Book.—Gladstone.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What prophets had warned the Northern Kingdom of punishment for sins? 2. Why were the priests so angry at Jeremiah? 3. What fate befell Uriah who prophesied just as did Jeremiah? (Jer. 26.20-24.) 4. What was the law in Dt. 18.20 regarding

a false prophet? 5. What was the chief charge against Jeremiah? 6. What similar charge was made against Stephen? (Acts 6.13, 14.) 7. How do you regard Civic wrongs? 8. What do you do about them?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

DISCOVERING A GUIDE-BOOK

Beginning the Lesson

Edward VI was only ten years of age when he became king of England, and but sixteen years old when he died. Prince Albert had a marble statue of the young king carved with his scepter resting on a Bible, and beneath the Bible these words inscribed, "While he was yet young he began to seek after the God of David his father." Those were the words which the Chronicler uses in regard to the king in our lesson today. Who was the king? How old was he when he began to reign?

Discovering a Guide-Book

We have a very graphic story today. Religion in Israel is at a very low ebb. There is an altar for sun worship on the roof of the temple itself; heathen altars are in the courtyard, bronze horses and chariots to the sun at the temple gates, and a figure of the goddess Ashtaroth in the very house of God. The temple of God is neglected and falling into ruin. When Josiah is eighteen he takes affairs into his own hands and launches his campaign against the heathen priests and their idolatrous worship.

If a boy had stood in the temple court at Jerusalem that far-away day, what would he have seen and heard? Tall scaffolding about the walls, where trowels and hammers rang upon hewed stones, and saws rasped and bit their way through sweet-smelling beams of cedar; where hammers beat steadily as carpenters drove home the nails and workmen called to each other for this and that. Fires hissed and roared where smiths blew upon them with blow-pipes and heavy hammers thudded and clanged as they beat out the hot iron upon the anvils.

White-robed priests picked their way here and there through the confusion as they went about their duties or offered the occasional sacrifices upon the great square altar, but worshipers were few. High up on the temple roof men were pulling down the tall altar, like a blunt pyramid, where men had made offerings to sun and moon and stars, and near the temple gates other men with great hammers were breaking up the bronze chariots that had been put there for the god of the sun.

Across on the hills he would see where men were cutting down the forest trees under which the heathen altars had been built, and dragging home the green branches for firewood, and pulling down by great ropes the tall, wooden obelisks that had been erected to heathen gods.

Round the temple courts were store-houses, mostly ruined and neglected. A workman is exploring one of them. All sorts of things are there. Old robes for the priests, old curtains for the temple, old vessels, basins, knives. In a corner carefully wrapped up, he finds a parchment scroll. It has been there many years, so imagine its condition, yellow, stained, writing blurred and faded. He goes out into the light and unrolls a little of it and sees the name of God on it. He hurries with it to Hilkiah the priest, who is in charge of the work.

Hilkiah tries to read it, but cannot, and takes it to Shaphan, the scribe. The two men with roll unfolded on a chest, try to read it, each following the lines with slow forefinger. Surely they would get excited. "Stop, while I read this," one would say to the other. "We must show this to the King," they agree. Hurriedly they roll up the book, and set out for the King's palace, only a short distance away.

In the King's palace Josiah is seated on a raised platform. He wears a long robe of white cotton edged with purple, a gold girdle and a high cap of purple velvet ornamented with jewels. Behind him stand two black slave boys, and there are a number of soldiers and attendants near.

Hilkiah and Shaphan enter and tell the story of how the scroll was found and ask to read it. Shaphan sits cross-legged on cushions on the floor, and as he reads Josiah leans forward greatly interested. The book is Deuteronomy and when Shaphan comes to verses 16-20 of chapter 28 Josiah trembles. (Let us turn to these verses and read them.) Josiah knows his people have not kept those laws. He jumps to his feet and taking hold of his robes tears them from collar to hem, in sign of his sorrow.

Then Josiah decides to call a national gathering. In every village and town horsemen come, blow horns and call the people together. Then they read the King's decree which orders them to send people to Jerusalem. The old temple has not seen such a crowd for fifty years as soon gather there. The high platform has been built in front of the temple from which trumpeters step forward and blow loud calls to quiet the people. Then come a procession of officials, priests in white, soldiers in armor, and then King Josiah in purple robes. "Long live the King! Long live King Josiah!" the people shout. Then the King tells them the story of the finding of the book of the law, and then he reads the words of the book until the people are trembling because they have not obeyed its commands.

The King rolls up the scroll and hands it to one of the scribes. Then he raises his hand to heaven and vows to obey the law of God, and asks the people to join him. They do so, "and all the days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of his fathers."—Adapted from The Making of a Story, by William J. May, in The Sunday School Chronicle.

Lost and Found Bibles

Adoniram Judson, the American missionary in Burma, had translated the Bible into the Burmese language when war was waged between Burma and England, and he was put in prison suspected of being a spy for England. His sufferings were terrible, for he was bound for nineteen months with three sets of fetters (part of the time with five), and confined in a loathsome cell. Mrs. Judson, knowing that the precious manuscript would be found and seized in her home, at first buried it, and then fearing that it would decay if left longer in the ground, she wrapped it about with cotton and made it into a pillow for her husband in his cell. Once the pillow was stolen by the soldiers but Mrs. Judson redeemed it by giving them a better one. Then one night Dr. Judson was hurried off to a distant prison and his pillow was thrown out into the prison yard. There one of his faithful converts found it and took it home, because it had belonged to his loved teacher.

Dr. Judson mourned for his lost Bible, but long afterwards to his great joy he found it uninjured in the house of his convert. Is it not wonderful that this book was saved?

Where is your Bible?

Is it true that for the majority of people the Bible, like that Book of the Law, might just as well be hidden in some dust-heap? In a Christian home a mother asked her son, a young man and a church member, where his Bible was. "I don't know, mother," he replied, "but I guess it is in my trunk upstairs." The mother then turned to her daughter and said, "And where is yours, Mary?" "Well, really, mother," the daughter said with embarrassment, "I can't tell you; I think it must be on one of my shelves." Where is your Bible?

Let Us Make the Bible our Guide-Book

About sixty years ago there was a great revival among the German people in southern Russia which led to the conversion of many orthodox Russians: they were given a special name at the time which still clings to them, one which should be appropriate to Christians everywhere. They were called *Stundists,* from the German word *Stunde*—hour or lesson,—because they met regularly for the study of the Bible.

In the days of Christ the most common name for a school was *Beth Hassepher*—the House of the Book—because that part of the Bible which we now call the Old Testament was practically the only subject of study. In the Koran, Mohammed usually designates Christians by the phrase "the people of the Book." People of the Book should we all in truth, be, and we cannot begin too early to hide its words in our hearts.

Sentence Sermons

My advice to you is that you cultivate an acquaintance with and a firm belief in the Holy Scriptures.—Benjamin Franklin.

To use books aright is to go to them for help.—Ruskin.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Where was Jeremiah born, and in whose reigns did he prophesy? (Jer. 1.1-3.) 2. How did Josiah's reign end? 3. What king followed Josiah? 4. Who was king at the time of this prophecy of Jeremiah's? (Jer. 26.1.) 5. How do you feel when some one tells you your faults? 6. What effect has the telling upon your conduct?

THE EARLY MINISTRY OF JEREMIAH

GOLDEN TEXT: We must obey God rather than men. Acts 5.29

LESSON Jeremiah 1.1-10; 6.10, 11; 8.18; 9.2; 26.1-24

DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 26.1-7

JEREMIAH 1.6 Then said I, Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child. 7 But Jehovah said unto me, Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. 8 Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith Jehovah. 9 Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth: 10 see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

26.8 And it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that Jehovah had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. 9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant? And all the people were gathered unto Jeremiah in the house of Jehovah.

10 And when the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house unto the house of Jehovah; and they sat in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's *house*. 11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. 12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, Jehovah sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. 13 Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God; and Jehovah will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. 14 But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes. 15 Only know ye for certain that, if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof; for of a truth Jehovah hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. JEREMIAH'S CALL AND CONSECRATION, 1.1-10. Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah (not the Hilkiah who found the book of the law, our last lesson), a priest in the little town of Anathoth, near Jerusalem. Jeremiah's name ("appointed by God") and his father's ("Jehovah is my portion") are tokens of the family's loyalty to the God of Israel, "at a time when the outburst among the Jews of a very different class of personal names betrays on the part of many a lapse from the true faith, and when the loyal remnant of the people were being persecuted by King Manasseh." In the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (about 626 B.C.), Jeremiah became conscious of a divine call to the prophetic office. It is natural to understand that Jeremiah had long meditated upon his country's sins, had felt impelled to witness against them, but was most reluctant to undertake the task. The inward struggle which took place in his sensitive and shrinking heart when something different from his ordinary consciousness made him certain that he was destined to be the prophet of woe, he tells in the form of a dialogue between God and himself.

Jeremiah speaks: "Ah, Lord Jehovah! behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child." Jeremiah was not a child in years, but in consciousness of ability. He distrusted himself at the moment of his call. Once it was a Moses, then it was a Gideon, then an Isaiah, and now a Jeremiah, all of whom re-echo the plaint of their own unfitness. But although their first reaction was like that of Hamlet when he cried:

> "The time is out of joint;—O, cursed spite!
> That ever I was born to set it right,"

yet with them all there was no delay in rendering themselves more fit for their tasks.

"There is a lesson here for all who feel in any degree the tyranny of their outward lot. There are hard facts against which we chafe and fret. We are set to tasks which we would fain refuse, or we are placed in surroundings which we think unsuitable. We are all tempted to turn to the easy ways of

escaping the burden. We can learn from Jeremiah the paramount claims of duty. If it be the will of God that you must tread a path that you choose not, from which the weak heart shrinks, know that the blessedness promised by Christ is yours, and cherish the thought of a closer communion with him who also was made perfect through suffering" (Hugh Black).

Jehovah speaks: "Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid because of them; for I am with thee to deliver thee." "Jehovah put forth his hand and touched my mouth;" thus Jeremiah years afterward expressed the thought of how burning were the words of Jehovah which seemed to come to him.

True it is of Jehovah which the poet puts into the mouth of one who knew him not:

"The gods need many a noble man to do
Their work on earth—they count on me and you."

The commission which Jeremiah received was to be "over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." "His work was to be radical and destructive in denouncing the sins of his people and predicting their chastening, but also one of restoration and rebuilding through leading them to repentance" (Dummelow).

"I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms." "Surely it is possible to argue that when the account was written the prophet was looking back over the actual facts of his ministry, and in recording its beginning he simply states its scope as afterwards revealed to him by the progress of events and the gradual enlargement of the sphere of his activity. To reject this account of Jeremiah's call, because it appears to magnify his importance, shows a lack of insight into the working of the prophet's mind; his whole attitude towards his vocation makes it quite clear that it was only God's appointment which made him undertake it, and that he relied on the divine strength entirely for power and ability to fulfil it" (L. Elliott Binns).

"Jeremiah was sure (1) that he was in the grip of a divine power, deliberately selected by it and equipped. He had been picked out; he could not help himself. (2) He was doomed to loneliness. (3) He was to be in perpetual opposition. His was to be the rôle of Cassandra predicting misery to incredulous or deaf ears. (4) That as Jehovah's spokesman he had Jehovah's authority. He was himself set over the nations. He was to root them up and pluck them down. And all their violence and hate would break on him in vain" (W. F. Lofthouse).

"What a conviction this for a young man to reach, that he is the man called by destiny to the sublimest task to which any human being can be called—the task of uplifting the moral life of his generation! The sense that our part has been deliberately shaped by divine fingers, that God has not only put us where we are but made us what we are, securing for us certain privileges and opportunities of birth and education, putting us through certain experiences and disciplines, bringing us within the circle of certain friendships and affections, not only watching but moulding the events of our lives, and bringing us, to our astonishment, face to face with a situation in which we are compelled to acknowledge that he is confronting us with himself—that is the greatest moment in our lives when all this comes home to us" (J. E. McFadyen).

Jeremiah's reluctance was overcome. "Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed," he later exclaimed, Jer. 20.7. With the call came the power. "Behold, I have made thee this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land." The prophet's whole career is proof that God was with him.

"All true prophets possess this knowledge that God is speaking through them. John Knox was conscious of being God's mouthpiece. Underneath the ceiling of his study on High Street, inscribed high up on the four walls, are still to be found these words from his lips, 'I am in the place where conscience bids me to speak the truth, therefore the truth I speak, impugn it

whoso list.' They were the personal apologetic of the great reformer's ministry" (G. L. Robinson).

II. JEREMIAH ON TRIAL FOR HIS LIFE, 26.8-11. See The Historical Background. "He who speaks the truth should stand with one foot in the stirrup," is a proverb of the Spaniards. Jeremiah had been boldly declaring the truth, and when he finished the priests and the prophets and people seized him, crying, "Thou shalt surely die." The prophets were false prophets (Jer. 23.16, 17; 28.11-17), the flatterers who surrounded the king. The law recorded in Dt. 18.20 was that the penalty of death should be inflicted upon one who spoke what God had not commanded, and they declared Jeremiah to be a false prophet. Their proof was their belief that they were the chosen people of God, and that God could not destroy their nation as Jeremiah had declared he would. "Jeremiah's persecutors probably relied on the fact that they, by virtue of their official position as priests and prophets, were entitled to an opinion as experts upon the question whether or not any particular person was lawfully speaking as a prophet; in other words, that they were the judges of the qualifications of the members of their class" (D. W. Amram).

"Truth is always unpleasant to those who are enamored of false ideals and evil customs, and who do not desire to correct their ignorance by comparison with the perfection of God. Like Jeremiah, the preacher and missionary are often called upon to proclaim unpleasant truths, and men's characters are shown by their attitude toward the revelation."

"Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, This temple shall be destroyed like Shiloh, and Jerusalem shall be desolate, without inhabitants?" they demanded. Shiloh was once a sacred place, the abode of the ark, but now it was fallen into ruin: see Jer. 7.12; 25.11. Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured and destroyed Jerusalem. "Had Jeremiah's address been delivered to the people generally, without containing, as it did, a denunciation of the official classes, namely, the priests and prophets, it probably would have passed without official recognition. It was not an uncommon thing for a zealous man to address the people in the name of God for the purpose of correcting wrongs both in public and in private life, but in this case the priests and the prophets felt aggrieved because Jeremiah called down the wrath of God upon the temple, and with its fall their official functions would necessarily cease. The prophets felt aggrieved because by implication he contrasted the prophets who were sent by God to admonish the people with those who were not prophets of Jehovah but were seekers of popularity: who, instead of correcting wrongs, countenanced them and even declared that they existed by the will of God" (D. W. Amram).

"When Lord Chatham urged England not to make war on the United States, he was howled down by the false patriots of the day. But history stamps him as the true patriot, his opponents as the false ones. When John Bright spoke against the folly of the Crimean War, he was made the butt of newspaper gibes, and nine-tenths of his countrymen laughed at him or sneered at him. But history shows that John Bright was right. He was the true patriot. The false patriot holds that you must never criticize your country's dealings with other lands. Perhaps the hardest duty that ever falls on a man who loves his country is to point out that his country is doing wrong. That heavy duty fell often on Jeremiah. Of course the false patriots of Jerusalem sneered at him, called him a Little Palestiner, said he was in the pay of the Chaldeans, just as in the past men who valued England's fair name and honor even more than additions to her Empire have been slandered by the scribes and Pharisees of an unchristian Press" (F. W. Aveling).

Report of the excitement reached the ears of the princes of Judah in the king's palace, where they were doubtless conducting affairs of state. "In Jerusalem there was around the kings of Judah, as around the later foreign governors, a large number of civil officials and servants. To give an idea of their number it is enough to mention the high officials named in the ancient court of Judah: the Servant of the King, the Scribe or Secretary, the Recorder or Remembrancer, the Chief of the Palace or Steward, all of them with their households resident in Jerusalem. To these must be added the other *sarim* or nobles who attended the court; several of lesser rank, the *mashkeh* or cupbearers, the keepers of the treasures and of the robes, the

serisim, probably, but not certainly, eunuchs, and a crowd of minor officials, *soterim* and *sopherim,* clerks and secretaries, and so forth. Many of the nobles had their own country estates, the income of which they would draw to the capital. But below them there were large numbers of officials who, as much as the mercenary soldiers, had to be sustained by the state" (George Adam Smith).

These princes came and sat in judgment in the entry of the new gate of the temple, probably the gate leading into the upper, or inner, court built about a century before by Jotham, 2 K. 15.35. (The "Grand *New* Hotel" in Jerusalem today is very old.) "This man is worthy of death" the priests and the prophets declared to the people (recall Mt. 26.66); "for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears" (Compare Acts 6.11-14).

Suppose that during the Great War a prophet had arisen in Germany and proclaimed that the nation was in the wrong, that she had broken her word, that she was carrying on the war in a wrong way, that she deserved to be conquered and would be conquered on account of her guilt. Would such a prophet have been popular? Prince Lichnowsky was patriotic enough to warn his country against her fatal course, but he was also wise enough to take refuge in Switzerland before he published his views.

III. JEREMIAH'S DEFENSE AND WARNING, 26.12-15. Jeremiah's defense was that his message had come to him from God, and he urged them to amend their ways and doings, and to obey the voice of Jehovah. If they would do this, Jehovah would avert the evil which he had pronounced upon them. Prophecy, then, was regarded as conditional; a change of conduct could prevent the threatened punishment. "Be not afraid because of them" had been the message of courage that came to him at his call, and now he stands boldly before his accusers and calmly says to them, "As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes." And then he solemnly reminds them that if they put him to death, they would bring innocent blood upon themselves (see Prov. 6.16, 17), for he was but declaring to them the words of God.

"With bonds, and scorn, and evil will
The world requites its prophets still" (Whittier).

IV. JEREMIAH'S ACQUITTAL, verses 16-19. Deeply impressed by the prophet's words, on their evidence alone, the princes and all the people declared him innocent, for he was God's true messenger. Certain elders cited the case of the prophet Micah, who in Hezekiah's reign prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, whereupon the king, instead of putting him to death, took his warning to heart and saved the city. Ahikam then removed Jeremiah to a place of safety.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

They sat in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's house, verse 10. It was at the city gates that courts of justice were held, and rulers conducted national affairs. Eli sat upon his seat at Shiloh watching for a messenger with news concerning the fate of the ark; Absalom rose up early and stood beside the way of the gate to steal the hearts of the men of Israel; and Ezra the priest read the book of the law to all the people who had gathered as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate of Jerusalem. The royal court of Jerusalem met at the temple gate. Stone seats are built into the walls along two sides of gateways to cities and public buildings in Palestine, and there the notables sit while the common people collect in the shade of the walls. Because of this custom the word *gate* became a synonym for *power,* as in Mt. 16.8. Compare our use of the word *bench,* for the court, the persons who sit as judges.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Prophet Jeremiah and his Book

This book is the longest of the prophetical writings. It is largely the autobiography of the prophet Jeremiah. We understand his life and character because he unconsciously reveals himself in his book, frankly lets us see the workings of his mind and heart.

The first twenty-five chapters consist mainly of his discourses; the second part of the book contains, mainly, accounts of events connected with his life and work. Read the thirty-sixth chapter, which gives a glimpse of how the book was written.

When he could no longer speak directly to the people, he had recourse to writing his message and having it read by another.

The addresses are not chronologically arranged, but are grouped according to theme. Their general tenor is that of stern denunciation, and to a careless reader the sense of gloom is most striking. But, as all interpreters of his book point out, his message to be appreciated must be felt as well as grasped intellectually. The wider and deeper the spiritual experience of the reader, the greater the understanding and the appreciation of the prophet's thought.

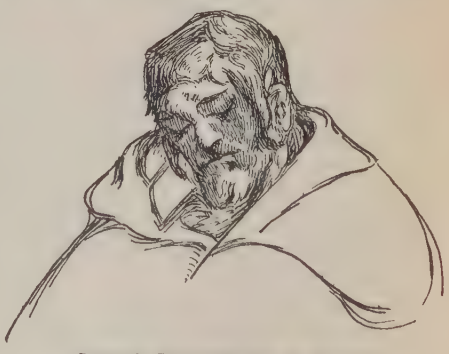
The historical situation explains Jeremiah's work. It was a momentous time in which he lived, a most tragic period for Judah's fortunes. He is the prophet of the decline and fall of Judah. His public ministry lasted through the reigns of Josiah (after the thirteenth year), Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoichior and Zedekiah—a period of over forty years. Those were eventful times. He knew of the invading Scythians in 626 B. C., the reform measures of Josiah in 620, Josiah's defeat and death on the field of Megiddo in 608, the fall of Nineveh and the end of the Assyrian Empire in 607, the rise of Babylon, the conquest of Judah in 597, the capture of Jerusalem in 586. And he saw the long night of exile settling down upon his nation, his prophetic insight went farther, and he beheld a new city arising out of the ruins of Jerusalem, a new covenant taking the place of the old.

The Call of Jeremiah, Chapter 6

The Book of the Law (our last lesson) was found in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, 621 B. C. Five years before that, the call came to Jeremiah to be a prophet of Jehovah, Jer. 1.1.

The Trial and Defense of Jeremiah, Chapter 26

During the forty years of Jeremiah's ministry, his was the task of setting himself in opposition to all the currents of his time, for Judah believed that she would escape the impending doom, that Jerusalem was inviolable because it held the temple, that the nation could not perish. Jeremiah had to warn her that her only possible course was to surrender to Babylon. At some great feast, doubtless, when the people were assembled at Jerusalem, Jeremiah uttered the warning recorded in the first seven verses of chapter twenty-six, which was followed by the events of our printed Text.



Sargent's Representation of Jeremiah

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Anathoth, the birthplace of Jeremiah (1.1) was a small village among the hills of Benjamin, three miles northeast of Jerusalem, just off from the great highway between Jerusalem and the North. The outlook from Anathoth towards the wilderness was stern and desolate, and, as one commentator points out, doubtless influenced the mind of Jeremiah, as is shown by the images which he used, 2.31; 4.11, etc. "It is the same open, arid landscape," writes Dr. George Adam Smith, "as that on which several prophets were bred: Amos, a few miles farther north at Tekoa; John the Baptist, and during his temptation our Lord himself. Then, as now, the traffic between Anathoth and Jerusalem was daily and close—country produce taken to the capital; poultry, salted fish, spices, and the better cloths brought back in exchange. We see how the history of Jerusalem may have influenced the boy. Solomon's temple was nearly four hundred years old. There were the city walls, some of them still older, the palace and the tombs of the kings—perhaps also access to the written rolls of chronicles and prophets. Above all, Anathoth lay within the swirl of rumor of which the capital was the center. Jerusalem has always been a tryst of the winds. It gathers echoes from the desert far into Arabia, and news blown up and down the great roads between Egypt and Damascus and beyond the Euphrates; or when these roads are deserted and men fear to leave their villages, news vibrating as it vibrates

only in the tremulous East, from hamlet to hamlet and camp to camp across incredible spaces.

"To the north lay the more fruitful Ephraim, now in foreign hands, her own people long gone into exile. It was natural that her sad fate should lie heavy on the still few but threatened homes of Benjamin, whose northern windows looked toward her; and that a heart like Jeremiah's should exercise itself upon the warning it carried for the two surviving tribes."

The princes of Judah came up from the king's house into the temple. The palace was below the temple court on the south, separated from it by a wall with an entrance gate.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Your pupils are gaining two ideals of life. One of them is built up by their experiences throughout the week. The other is built up by imagination and judgment on Sunday. Your success as a Christian teacher depends upon how well the two ideals of life which your pupils are building, harmonize. Unless the Sunday vision stands always in consciousness as an outline to be harmoniously filled through the experiences of life your pupils will be persons of two standards. Insist, therefore, upon constant applications to concrete work-a-day examples, and especially stress frequent applications to self. Be bold like Jeremiah, if you are certain of your facts, but remember also that you are a teacher, not a preacher, and as teacher it is your privilege to help your pupils acquire a little of the spirit of Jeremiah.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

FIDELITY IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTIES

Beginning the Lesson

Dr. F. B. Meyer is one of the oldest and best loved preachers of Great Britain. He has often come to America and you may have had the privilege of hearing him preach. From childhood he had the conviction that he was to become a preacher, but when he was sixteen, he tells us, the sense of his unfitness overwhelmed him and caused him great anxiety. "How could I speak?" he questioned himself. "What command of language did I possess? What right had I to suppose that I was more gifted than others whom I met in our debating society? One spring morning I had been praying long for guidance and I knelt down again asking that I might be led to some passage of God's Word which would meet my case. I opened my Bible as I knelt, and, to my complete surprise, it opened at this passage (our text from the first chapter of Jeremiah). I had never read or heard it quoted. It was absolutely new to me. I read it over and over, and realized at that moment that other men before me had felt the same diffidence as I had experienced, and that there was special provision made for such." (Continue with Explanations and Comments upon our first selection from Jeremiah.)

Jeremiah's Words which Aroused the Fury of his Hearers

"Jeremiah's audience consisted of worshipers on the way to the temple, and would correspond to an ordinary congregation of church goers. As an acknowledged prophet, he was well within his rights in expecting a hearing from the attendants at the feast, and men would be curious to see and hear one who had been the dominant influence in Judah during the reign of Josiah. Moreover, in the absence of evening newspapers and shop windows, a prophet was too exciting a distraction to be lightly neglected. From Jehovah's charge to speak all that he had commanded him to speak and not to keep back a word, we may assume that Jeremiah's discourse was long: it was also avowedly an old sermon; most of his audience had heard it all before, all of them were quite familiar with its main topics. They listened in various moods of a modern congregation 'sitting under' a distinguished preacher. Jeremiah's friends and disciples welcomed the ideas and phrases that had become a part of their spiritual life. Many enjoyed the speaker's earnestness and eloquence, without troubling themselves about the ideas at all. There was nothing especially startling about the well-known threats and warnings; they had become 'A tale of little meaning though the words were strong.' Men hardened their hearts against inspired prophets as easily as they do against the most pathetic appeals of modern evangelists. Mingled with the crowd were Jeremiah's professional rivals, who detested both him and his teaching—priests who regarded him as a traitor to his own caste, prophets

who envied his superior gifts and his force of passionate feeling. He was allowed to finish what he had to say, but in his peroration he had insisted on a subject that stung the indifferent into resentment and roused the priests and prophets to fury."

Follow these words of W. H. Bennett in The Expositor's Bible with Explanations and Comments upon our text from Jeremiah twenty-six.

The Fate of Great Men who have Been Faithful in the Face of Difficulties

The words of an ancient monarch—*Imperium oceanum esse malorum,* To reign is to be plunged into an ocean of trouble—apply to any position of trust whether in statesmanship or in religion. "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil," said King Ahab of Micaiah, the fearless prophet who would not compromise with truth. "I have wearied myself all the days of my life to make known to thee the truths of the faith and of holy living," said Savonarola to his loved city of Florence, "and I have had nothing but tribulations, derision and reproach." The world is a hard place for the Micaiahs who tell evil-doers of their sins: tribulation and even imprisonment have always been their portion.

Jeremiah's whole life was one of martyrdom. So bitter was the hatred against him that his fellow-townsmen of Anathoth sought to murder him (11.19-23); his own family treated him treacherously (12.6); the priests thrust him into the stocks for profaning, as they claimed, the temple court by his prophecies of destruction (20.1, 2); and often he seems to have been held up by a mob who clamored for his blood. Standing as he did almost alone, "a man of strife and a man of contention of the whole earth," exceedingly sensitive as he was by nature to the treatment received from friends and foes, he nevertheless endured the burden that might well have crushed the strongest spirit, for stronger than persecution from without was the impelling force from within. He could not be unfaithful to his mission. "If I say I will not make mention of Jehovah nor speak any more in his name," he says, "then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain." The prophet's burden was lightened by the prophet's consciousness of his Lord's approval.

"Count he o'er life's chosen heroes,
They were men who stood alone,
While the men they agonized for
Flung the contumelious stone;
Stood serene, and down the future
Saw the golden beam incline
To the side of perfect justice,
Mastered by their faith divine."

How Hugh Latimer Met Opposition to his Message of Truth

On one occasion Henry the Eighth was so displeased with a sermon of Bishop Latimer's that he ordered him to make an apology on the next Sabbath.

The day came. The preacher announced his text and then began thus: "Hugh Latimer, knowest thou before whom thou art to speak? Behold his most excellent Majesty, Henry of England, who can take away thy life with a nod! Take heed, therefore, how thou displease him."

The preacher paused, and then cried: "But, Hugh, consider thy message and whose ambassador thou art. The King of Kings hath sent thee! Deliver thy message, therefore, come what will; and tremble not."

Public Wrongs Must be Rebuked without Regard for Personal Consequences

There is little danger today that life will be forfeited, but business may be lost, social standing may be sacrificed, friends may be estranged. Winston Churchill's The Inside of the Cup is not true to the facts in its larger meanings, but in some of its details it is deeply true. When a man stops to consider whether he will suffer from his denunciation of evil he will always refrain from doing it.—Cleland B. McAfee.

Strong Preaching

It would have been an easy matter in David's time for the court chaplain to deliver a sermon on sin in the abstract, an eloquent sermon, too, "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null"; but when it came to *cherchez la femme* and "Thou art the man!" that was hard preaching—harder for Nathan than for David—nevertheless it sent the royal culprit reeling to his chamber on the housetop with fingers pointing at him from every nook and corner and voices whispering "Bathsheba"

until his sensuous heart broke with the cry: "Have mercy, O God; purge me with hyssop; my transgression is ever before me!"

In one of Paul's letters to Timothy, the young pastor of the Ephesian Church, he admonishes him on this wise: "I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word! Be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

If the preaching of our time is not what it should be, the blame is largely due to people with "itching ears"—ears that itch for novelty, for entertainment, for sermons that will not ruffle their sins. "Like people, like priest." As long as there are congregations that call for smooth things there will be no lack of men in the pulpit to provide for them.—From a Sermon by David James Burrell.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Jeremiah the prophet of the inner life. See Chapter VIII of Great Characters of the Old Testament, by Robert W. Rogers.

2. Jeremiah's experiences at the hands of his fellow-townsmen. See pages 245-247 of The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah, by Charles Foster Kent.

3. The minister is sometimes more popular when he talks about sins among the Jews than when he talks of sins in the pews.—John Andrew Holmes.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What has this address in common with our text last week from the twenty-sixth chapter? 2. Explain verse 4. 3. Explain verse 10. 4. Explain verse 21.

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

TAKING A STAND FOR GOD

Beginning the Lesson

About twenty years ago the people of Paris were warned that the River Seine, which flows through their city, would overflow its banks. Men skilled in measuring rivers knew that it was rising rapidly, and they knew that the heavy rains and the melting of an unusually large fall of snow would soon bring an immense amount of water down the river which would tear away bridges and flood the city. The French people made fun of their prophecies. As they crossed the bridges they called out gaily to one another, "Look out, or you will get your feet wet." But the flood came. It destroyed property valued at millions of dollars, made thousands of people homeless, and caused very great suffering.

We learn today how a prophet warned the people of Judah that a disaster was coming to them. Who was the prophet? How did he receive his call to be a prophet?

Taking a Stand for God

There were multitudes in Germany at the beginning of the sixteenth century who were shocked at the scandalous sale of indulgences, but there was only one, Luther, the monk of Erfurt, who dared to rebuke the Romish Church. The poor monk had reason to fear the powerful Duke George, yet he said: "If I had duty to do in Leipsic, I would ride through the city though it rained Duke Georges."

The Luther monument at Worms is one of the most impressive monuments in Europe. Luther stands superbly wrought in stone, "fittingly surrounded by four kindred souls, fellow-battlers all, and two of them martyrs to the cause of religious liberty, and reformation, Huss, Wycliffe, Waldo, Savonarola—a glorious company of the saints. With head erect and defiant and with soul unafraid, Luther is pictured uttering his memorable words, spoken by him at the Diet of Worms, nearly four hundred years ago: *Hier stehe ich. Ich kann nicht anders. Gott helfe mir, Amen.* Here I take my stand. I can not otherwise. So help me God, Amen.

"That which he knew, he uttered,
Conviction made him strong;
And with undaunted courage
He faced and fought the wrong.

No power on earth could silence him
Whom love and faith made brave;
And though four hundred years have gone
Men strew with flowers his grave."

Moral Cowards

A Fiji chief, according to Baghot, was one day going over a mountain path followed by a long line of people, when he happened to stumble and fall. All the rest of the people immediately stumbled and fell also, all save one man, whom the others at once attacked, demanding to know why he considered himself better than his chief. Those who have no manly independence of their own are wont to berate the one who, like this Fiji savage, has the courage of his convictions.

It is said that a timid court preacher when preaching before Louis XVI made the declaration that "All men must die." Whereupon the king frowned, and the affrighted preacher stammered out, "I—I—mean almost all, your majesty."

In one of our cities a meeting of citizens was called to protest against a great public wrong. One prominent man after another was asked to act as Vice-president of the meeting and refused, saying that he would like to do so, that his heart was with the movement, but on account of his business relations he dared not. What do you think of such men?

We Must Obey God rather than Men

It was in the year 1745, when Cornwall was like a pandemonium in bitter opposition to John Wesley. It was in the town of Falmouth, and a howling mob filled the streets trying to find the evangelist, determined to kill him. He, in a house in the town, was deserted by all his friends except a young girl—a servant girl I imagine—whom he calls "poor Kitty"; and in the room they heard the mob in the street, the fierce yells, and they heard the mob break into the house and into the adjoining room. There was only a thin partition of wood between the room and the one in which Wesley and the girl were, and the mob was battering at that partition. Wesley quietly took down from the partition a mirror lest it should be broken, and then the trembling girl said: "Oh, sir, what must we do?" Wesley replied, "We must pray. Our lives are not worth an hour's purchase." "Is it not better to hide?" said the poor girl; "would it not be better for you to get into the closet?" "No," said Wesley, "it is best for me to stand just where I am."

Now you will remember that John Wesley, although he was an heroic soul, was a very little body—one of the shortest and apparently feeblest of men, and he counted it better, after praying to stand just where he was. The mob was soon joined by a number of privateers who came up from the harbor, and were ready enough to join in the chase, and indignant with the people for making so long a business of it. Wesley heard them rush into the neighboring room, and with a cry, "Avast, lads, avast," thrust themselves against the whole partition, and the whole partition fell down, and the howling mob was in the room before him. Then John Wesley said quietly to them: "Here I am; which one of you has anything to say against me?" and so appalled were they by the quiet courage of the little man, that without knowing what they did, they made way, and Wesley quietly walked through them all into the street, and there in the street, with the mob howling round him, he began quietly to preach, and as he preached the crowd was anxious to hear; and presently the very leaders of the mob—the captains of it, as he calls them—gathered round him and shouted out: "Not a man shall touch him; let him speak." And there he delivered his message, and quietly passed through them to the harbor, where he took boat. And he entered in his journal, "I never saw before the hand of God so plainly shown as here." That man feared God, and he feared nothing else in the world.—R. F. Horton.

Sentence Sermons

"You have no business with consequences: you are to tell the truth."

Meekness has its uses, but meekness may easily drift into mere cowardice, into connivance with evil, into complaisance toward wrong.—W. J. Dawson.

Live pure, speak truth, right wrong,
Else wherefore born?—Tennyson.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. On what occasion did Jesus accuse the people of Jerusalem of making his house a den of robbers? 2. Who said "To obey is better than sacrifice"? 3. In what words does Jeremiah express the thought that obedience is better than sacrifice?

LESSON VII—MAY 19

JEREMIAH CALLS TO OBEDIENCE

GOLDEN TEXT: Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people. Jeremiah 7.23

LESSON Jeremiah 7.1-26 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 96.7-13

JEREMIAH 7.1 The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, 2 Stand in the gate of Jehovah's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of Jehovah, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship Jehovah. 3 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. 4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, the temple of Jehovah, are these. 5 For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor; 6 if ye oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt: 7 then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, from of old even for evermore.

8 Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. 9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods that ye have not known, 10 and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations? 11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, saith Jehovah.

21 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel: Add your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh. 22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I have brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: 23 but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. OUTWARD RITUAL IS NOT RELIGION, verses 1-4. Jeremiah felt impelled to stand in the gate of the temple and warn the people. See The Historical Background. To all who entered in at these gates to worship in the temple, Jeremiah cried: "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, amend your ways and your doings (a favorite expression with Jeremiah), and I will cause you to dwell in this place, you need not fear being carried off into exile. Trust not in the lying words of false prophets who declare unto you that God will never permit this holy temple to be destroyed." The threefold repetition of the words "the temple of Jehovah" suggests the energy of iteration that belongs only to Eastern fanatics, Dean Stanley observes. Recall the repeated cries of the fanatics in the theater of Ephesus, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19).

"Is it not thus that the children of godly parents presume on the results of ancestral piety? Is it not thus that evil-living men will risk the consequences of sin, because they are prepared to make liberal gifts to religion? The drink-seller, the opium-smuggler, the slave-impostor, have all, in one form or another, administered sedatives to conscience, saying: 'The temple of the Lord! The temple of the Lord!'" (F. B. Meyer).

"The fanatical confidence in the inviolability of the temple, which Jeremiah thus deprecates, implies a time of public danger. A hundred years before this time the temple and the city had really come through a period of the gravest peril, justifying in the most palpable and unexpected manner the assurances of the prophet Isaiah. This was remembered now, when another crisis seemed imminent, another trial of strength between the God of Israel and the gods of the heathen. Only part of the teachings of Isaiah had rooted itself in the popular mind—the part most agreeable to it. The sacrosanct inviolability of the temple, and of Jerusalem for its sake, was an idea readily appropriated and eagerly cherished. It was forgotten that all depended on the will and purposes of Jehovah himself; that the heathen might be the instruments with which he executed his designs, and that an invasion of Judah might mean, not an approaching trial of strength between his omnipotence and the impotency of the false gods, but the judicial outpouring of his righteous wrath upon his own rebellious people" (George Adam Smith).

"The public addressed by the prophet Jeremiah had not a little in common

with the American public of to-day. It was a cheerful, lighthearted public, impatient of anything reminding them that their present conditions were tinged with dangerous significance. Materially prosperous, they liked to think that nothing could disturb that prosperity. Politically safe—at least they had developed the art of playing off one great power against another—they barricaded themselves behind the conviction that nothing could break in upon that safety. Theoretically orthodox, they could be practically apostate and yet feel themselves protected by their God. Contemporary nations, with their conflicting ambitions and hereditary stripes, might become bankrupt and break up, but with a little prudence Judah could be secure in her self-sufficient life and in her isolation" (Basil King).

II. THERE MUST BE OBEDIENCE TO THE COVENANT OF OLD, verses 5-7. The continued security of the people in the land of their fathers would depend upon their reforming and practicing the social virtues, Jeremiah declared,—the securing of justice between a man and his neighbor, the freeing from oppression of the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and the avoidance of the shedding of innocent blood—and also upon the avoidance of the worship of false gods. The stranger was the sojourner from away, the alien resident temporarily in Judah. He and the fatherless with the widow had no voice in the administration of affairs and could be easily oppressed.

"As the potter has power over the clay to make and to change as he pleases, so is the nation in the hands of God to do with as seems best to him. It is not for us to try to mould the national life and purpose without God and his son Jesus Christ, into whose hands the nations of the world have been given; it is for us to make sure first of all that our nation is right with God and that we have the spirit of submission and obedience to him. Then the vessel will come out a vessel of honor, for the hands of God will be moulding the clay on the wheel" (The Youth's Companion).

III. STRONG ACCUSATIONS, verses 8-11. With great indignation the prophet accused the people of flagrant sins, breaking the commandments against theft, adultery, false witnessing, and idolatry, worshiping Baal and other gods, and then keeping up a pretense of worship, coming to the temple ("stand before me in my house") and saying, "We are delivered," "By the discharge of this formality we are set free for a return to wickedness." "Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it, saith Jehovah." Recall Christ's words to the defilers of the temple, Mark 11.15-17.

"Anyone who thinks that by the observance of conventional form or the energy of zealous service he can compound for self-indulgence and sin, has altogether misconceived the message of the Gospel. If we would be Christians at all—in the true sense of the term—we must cultivate absolute honesty of soul" (J. Stuart Holden).

"Jeremiah was lowly, despised, persecuted. He was probably the best hated man in Jerusalem. But he did not flinch from his duty of telling the disagreeable truth. Every age needs prophets who are brave enough to do that—Cassandra on the wall of windy Troy, Dante flying from ill-counselled Florence, Carlyle picturing the shame and danger of self-complacent England, our own young men who are proclaiming the peril of wealth-worshiping America.

"Pessimists, ravens," cry the crowd, "away with you!" No, for if these forsake us. we shall be in greater danger. The country whose seers prophesy only smooth things is likely to have a rough time" (Henry van Dyke).

IV. TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE, verses 21-23. "Add your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat ye flesh." "Multiply your victims *ad libitum.* It will avail you naught" (Dummelow).

Any act of worship that is merely mechanical—lip service, for example—he would have denounced with equal vigor.

"For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them." "This need not be more than a forcible oratorical expression, not meaning that no ceremonial laws were given to Israel when brought

out of Egypt, but that in the promulgation of the Ten Commandments on Sinai there was no direction concerning sacrifice" (Dummelow). "Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you."

"They thought their formal devotions were more than enough to counterbalance any breaches of the decalogue; they laid that flattering unction to their souls. They could make it up with God for setting his moral law at naught. It was merely a question of compensation. They did not see that the moral law is as immutable as laws physical; and that the consequences of violating it are as inseparable from it as pain from a blow, or death from poison. They did not see that the moral law is simply the law of man's health and wealth, and that the transgression of it is sorrow and suffering and death" (George Adam Smith).

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From Josiah to Jehoiakim

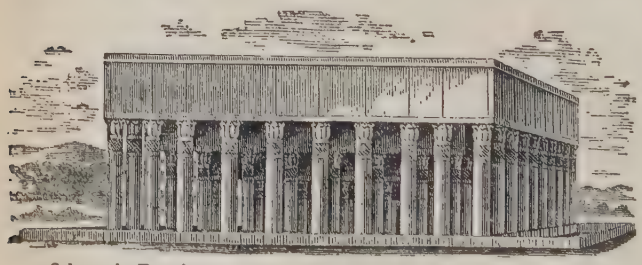
Josiah ruled for thirteen years after the finding of the Book of the Law. Then Necho, Pharaoh of Egypt, started forth on a career of conquest and was met on the Plain of Esdraelon by Josiah. In the battle of Megiddo Josiah was defeated and slain, 608 B. C. It was not now a question of independence, but of choice between two foreign sovereigns, Egypt or Assyria. For three years Judah remained a vassal of Necho. Shallum, Josiah's second son, was made king under the new name of Jehoahaz. In three months he was carried off captive to the conqueror's camp at Hamath, and was the first king of Judah to die in exile. Necho then placed Josiah's older son Eliakim on the throne. Eliakim took the name of Jehoiakim.

Jehoiakim's Rule

"For a few years a temporary splendor remained combined with the restoration of old heathen rites. The king himself, by enforced labor, enlarged his palace, roofed it with cedar, painted it with vermilion, as if the evil day were still far off, and he would rest securely under the protection of the Egyptian power, whose heavy tribute he exacted from his unwilling subjects. In the recollection of his subjects he remained fixed as the last example of those cruel, selfish, luxurious princes, the natural product of oriental monarchies, the disgrace of the monarchy of David."

The Time of This Address

This address was delivered "in the gate of Jehovah's house." In our last lesson we heard that the trial of Jeremiah was conducted "in the entry of the new gate of Jehovah's house." The message of the two addresses as well as the place of delivery is the same. Was there but one address given in this place by Jeremiah, and is the account here in the seventh chapter the fuller one, while that reported in the twenty-sixth chapter is followed by (what is not mentioned in chapter seven) an account of the outspoken courage?



Solomon's Temple According to Paine

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

"I don't know much about the things for which we are working, but I believe in them," said Roosevelt to Jacob Riis one day. "And what I have tried to be was a good sounding-board for them." And that was what he was for scores of progressive undertakings in his time.

Everyone, though not gifted enough to be a prophet, can be a "sounding-board" for great movements and reform measures.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

OBEDIENCE ESSENTIAL IN TRUE RELIGION

Beginning the Lesson

The following conversation as imagined by Arthur B. Rhinow and told in The Christian Century, brings vividly before us the situation which Jeremiah had to face:

On the roof of his house in Anathoth, the old priest lounged with the air of one who was acquainted with every finesse of comfort. His couch was soft, and the draperies of the canopy were rich. His shrewd face was a study in smiles, befitting the corpulency of his body.

Before him stood Jeremiah, the prophet. He did not mind the rays of the sun, hot even in the late afternoon. Plain was his garb, and plain the hood, shading lean features, set with luminous eyes.

"I asked you to come to me," the priest began, "because I have something to tell you that is for your own good. You look like a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, full of lamentations. You must learn to look at the bright side of things. Don't let the corners of your mouth sag. Learn to smile, smile, smile. There is so much to be proud of, and to enjoy. Of course, there are the poor, but there will always be the poor."

The prophet was silent. He was struggling with a surge of sadness. How could he smile! How could this priest before him smile! A film gathered over his eyes illumined by a fire within. The surge found expression:

"The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle dove and the crane and swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."

The priest raised his hands. There was an attempt at indignation, but his features hardly lost their bland composure. "If you are not reasonable, you will be disliked," he said. "Already you have lost favor, and the priests are beginning to hate you. We want to keep things smooth, and your ravings are annoying. You go too far. You have prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. That makes me smile. The temple! The home of Jehovah! Impossible!"

Long had the emotions of the prophet been repressed. Now they overwhelmed him. Like one possessed he poured out his predictions.

"I tremble for sorrow. The walls of my heart will break. The enemy comes up in dense, huge masses, like clouds, his chariots rush on like a whirlwind, his horses are swifter than eagles in their flight. Woe to us, we are destroyed."

The flow of fervid eloquence did not cease until the passion had been spent. The sun was setting, and the hills were roseate, but on the face of the prophet perspiration mingled with tears. At last he stood as one waiting for a reply from the couch. When no answer came, he bent over to look. Alas, the priest was fast asleep, an infantile smile on his chubby face.

Stand in the Gate of Jehovah's House, and Proclaim there This Word

There are men who, like John the Baptist, can bring the crowd to them, as their personal followers, but most evangelists and educators must go where the crowds are—and that today is largely in the cities. These are the vantage-points for influence; these for better or worse dominate the country. The financial power, for one thing, in the cities is tremendous. The newspapers of the cities exercise an incalculable influence in molding public opinion. Vice flourishes in the massed precincts, where reputations do not seem to be of much account, or where the gratifier of appetite is lost in the crowd. Multiple evils abound in the modern metropolis, and the worst of it is that so many people take this condition for granted, and regard it as irremediable.

Nevertheless, there are the Jeremiahs, who are crying in the ears of Jerusalem. Many of them are shouting from the housetops, that is, are using publicity methods for all they are worth. Some of them have the hearing of financial magnates, lawmakers, judges, and juries. Others are social leaders, serving Christ in drawing-rooms, using their influence against crude and coarse shows, or questionable entertainments. The churches must put up their cry for righteousness, social justice and the worship of God. There are those who will listen, even in a modern Babylon, and when they obey the higher law, hundreds of country districts will become affected by the zealous witness.—Zion's Herald.

Making over the World

Shelley said of himself that he had a passion for reforming the world. There is no doubt that, as we begin to get acquainted with the great world, we feel more and more that it needs reforming. There is so much that is out of joint, so much evil and misery and suffering that seem cruelly unnecessary and stupid. Every young, eager heart feels at times the impulse to plunge in and tear up and rearrange and make over in some way.

It is the golden privilege of youth to dream of making over the world, and for such making over as is possible nothing is more needed or more helpful than the superabundant vigor and energy of youth. Furthermore, youth believes and hopes that the world can be made over, and such belief and hope are splendid signs of courage and vitality, which should be developed and cherished in every possible way, and not mocked at or neglected.

While one is waiting and making up one's mind how best to make over the larger world, it is not a bad plan to do what one can to a little corner of it, and to try to make over oneself. This is apt to prove quite an undertaking. It requires prolonged effort and patience; but the effort is profitable as such, and also it may throw a lot of light on the effort to make over the world.—Condensed from The Youth's Companion.

Righteousness Exalteth a Nation

The hero of a captivating story by Lucy Furman in The Atlantic, about conditions in the Tennessee Mountains, is Giles, a young man who first learned to read at seventeen and then, three years later became the teacher. He was "starved for knowledge," and left to acquire more, but returned one Fourth of July to have a hand in the school-raising. He is called upon for a speech, and this is what he says:

"I used to stand on one of these ridge-tops, friends, gazing out over these steep hills and valleys, and picturing in my mind the world beyond—a world where, because everybody had knowledge, everybody was virtuous and law-abiding and God-fearing, a Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Then I went out, but I never found that Kingdom, that city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God. It's not in the level land, or anywhere in our great country. I had to learn that it is not knowledge but righteousness that exalteth a nation. Everywhere men are seeking riches, success, pleasure, more earnestly than the Kingdom of God, forgetting the Hand that led them to these shores, the purpose for which they came.

"We mountain people, shut away here for so long in our rugged hills, knowing nothing but hard work and plain living, never tendering ourselves with ease and pleasure, have been freer from temptation, better able to keep the faith of our fathers. We never forget that some day we must give an account to the Judge of all the earth. The wickedest man among us believes and trembles. Our good Old Primitive preachers—all honor and love to them—may not have had learning and education, but they had what was better, the Word of God, and never ceased for a hundred years and more to hold it up before us. And not because of the written Word only are we a believing people. Like the patriarchs of old, we listen for the Voice of God, and hear it. We call upon him and he answers. In the gray of the morning, climbing through the mists to hoe corn, in the cool of the evening when work is done, he meets with us, and blesses us. In dreams and visions of the night, too, he makes himself known to us. We are men of faith in the Living God.

"Looking through the length and breadth of this great land of America, reading and inquiring about all sections, it seems to me that maybe the people of these mountains are more like the founders of this nation, the old Pilgrim Fathers, than anybody else now in it. You know the Pilgrims were plain, honest, hard-working men that sailed across the wide sea from Old England nearly three hundred years ago, in a little boat called the Mayflower, and other boats, and settled on a wild bleak shore, that they might have freedom to serve God according to their conscience. Who knows but that some day plain, rugged men like us may again be needed to make the nation safe—that we have not been shut away here so long for some divine purpose? My prayer and hope is that we may be ready when our time comes, may be to our country in our day what the Pilgrims were in theirs: bulwarks of truth and righteousness, haters of sin, builders of the Kingdom of God in a backsliding world."

Obedience the One Essential

One man will tell you that the end of life is to be true; another will tell you that it is to deny self; another will say it is to keep the Ten Commandments;

a fourth will point you to the Beatitudes. One will tell you it is to do good, another that it is to get good, another it is to be good. But the end of life is none of these things. It is more than all and it includes them all. The end of life is not to deny self, nor to be true, nor to keep the Ten Commandments—it is simply to do God's will. It is not to get good, nor to be good, nor even to do good—it is just what God wills, whether that be working or waiting, or winning or losing, or suffering or recovering, or living or dying.—Henry Drummond.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Aggressive fighting for the right is the noblest sport the world affords.—Theodore Roosevelt.

2. Religion is the recognition of the moral law as the commands of God.—Kant.

3. What do you think of the oft-repeated advice to ministers, "Stick to the gospel and let business and politics alone"?

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is the meaning of the proverb in verse 29? 2. What is the material view of religion? 3. What is the view of our text? 4. Explain verse 34.

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

DOING WHAT GOD COMMANDS

Beginning the Lesson

"Imagine the scene! Multitudes are flocking to the temple, the house of God. They are proud of their church; it is a magnificent pile of buildings. They glory in its appointments, in the beauty of its liturgy, in its wonderful choir. As they approach the temple they see a young prophet preaching with tremendous earnestness. He challenges their motives. What offering are they bringing to God? He demands justice among neighbors: do they render it? He demands moral conduct: have they performed it? He demands worship in spirit and in truth: do they offer it? Security will come from nothing else. Jehovah will not permit his temple to become like some cover which shelters robbers; but will destroy it as he destroyed that of Shiloh in the Northern Kingdom, and will banish Judah as he banished Ephraim from his land."

"Amend your ways and your doings," the prophet cried. Of what evil things had the people been guilty? (Explanations and Comments.)

The Hammer of Jeremiah

Some time ago a writer in The Independent gave an account of a revival meeting in a colored church which she attended with five other Sunday-school teachers. Brother Jonah Watkins, a white-wooled, bent-backed man of seventy, was called upon to pray. He prayed, she says, as though his lips had indeed been touched by a live coal from God's own altar. "O Lord," he prayed, "Thou knowest dis people. Here we are befo' thee, down on our marrer-bones in de lowlands of sorrow. Raise us up, deah Lord, an' stan' us up upon our feet upon de mountain tops of glory. An' de sinnahs of dis congregation, deah Lord, smite 'em wid de hammah of Jeremiah."

"I heard no more," says the writer, Miss La Mance. "The hammer of Jeremiah—what was it? I had read the Prophet Jeremiah through and through, but never a syllable had I caught about Jeremiah's hammer. What did this bent-backed colored man know about Jeremiah that the wise teachers of the law had overlooked? The question was broached on the homeward walk. Our party had all been struck with the expression, but not one of us six Sunday-school teachers had the remotest idea what Jeremiah's hammer might be. The next day six men and women read their Bibles, and each of the six began at the first verse of the first chapter of Jeremiah. One by one, as we reached the twenty-ninth verse of the twenty-third chapter, we found what we were after.

" 'Is not my word like as fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' Jeremiah's hammer was God's word, which was able to break down the flinty resistance of the indifferent soul. Could Scripture reference have been more applicable? And the wonder of all was that this low-born son of toil, spelling his texts out word by word, should have found the kernel of the meat while others with every help at hand, passed over it."

To Obey is Better than Sacrifice

It happened when my friend was a child. Her father was one of the stern Puritans of New England; stern ineeed, but wise and very loving. They had gone out into the West and were living in the neighborhood of a beautiful lake. It was thought not safe for the child to go alone to the lake, so she had been forbidden. But the fascination of the lovely sheet of water was too much for the poetical soul of the child; so, as she wandered about within the prescribed limits, the temptation overpowered her, and she had a delightful stroll all by herself along the shore. She tried to quiet her conscience by keeping out of all danger most carefully, and she thought if she told her father so, he would see the reasonableness of it. But she was politic enough to gather a handful of beautiful shells and bring them to her father. When she put them into his hand he flung them away as far as he could, and simply said, "My child, to obey is better than sacrifice." The lesson was never forgotten. It entered into her blood, and had, no doubt, not a little to do with making her the splendid woman and noble mother she has been.—J. Monro Gibson.

Doing What God Commands

A great many Christians obey God because they know it is right, and yet there is no love in their service. Doubtless it is better to give this obedience than not to obey at all. But what a hard, dead thing it is! The machine obeys when I turn on the steam or press the button; but I never think of the machine as caring anything for me. It obeys because it must. My boy may obey me because he is afraid to disobey, but there is no comfort in his obedience, no love. Indeed, when we look deeply, it is a question whether there can be real obedience, "glorious obedience," unless the heart acts as well as the body. If the law against stealing were removed from our statute-books, many now esteemed honest would become dishonest; is there any real honesty in them? If it were not for his apparent profit, the man would not go to church; is there any merit in his church attendance? Mechanical obedience is hard, cold, unfeeling, useless.

Some Christians shut their eyes, sigh, and say: "Well, we will do this because God asks it, but we can see no good to come, no sure results." Perhaps such obedience is a little higher than the last, but it has not much trusting love. The clerk in my office writes my letters, but he has no idea what they mean. My boy takes the medicine I give him with a sigh, saying, "It will not do me any good." And I find little to comfort me in such obedience. It has so little feeling, it seems to question my wisdom and my affection. Christians sigh and cry: "Ah, Lord, this is hard; I suppose it is all right, but I cannot see thy way, it is dark. Just lead me." And they go on just as you have seen a blind man go when led by the hand, groping, nervous, uncertain. Oh, how the dear Father's heart must sorrow at such obedience!

But when we obey because we love him who speaks to us, then our obedience is glorious. It is no longer "I must," but "I wish to," that leads us to act. We do his will because we cannot help it. See what results follow such glorious obedience! —Floyd W. Tomkins, in Beacons of Life's Voyage.

Sentence Sermons

To understand and obey the laws by which God governs his world is the way of peace; to ignore or defy them is the way to destruction.—John Edgar McFadyen.

That nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish.—Isaiah.

Religion is living right towards God and men.—Peter Ainslie.

What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?—Micah.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What does verse 29 mean? 2. How does Jeremiah express the thought that every one is responsible for his own sins? 3. What does the word *covenant* mean? 4. How does it differ from a promise? 5. How is the thought of the spiritual nature of the new covenant expressed? 6. What does the word *grace* mean, verse 17 of First John?

LESSON VIII—MAY 26

GOD'S LAW IN THE HEART

GOLDEN TEXT: Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee. Psalm 119.11

LESSON Jeremiah 31.1-40; John 1.17; Hebrews 8.7-13

DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 119.9-16

JEREMIAH 31.29 In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. 30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.

31 Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

JOHN 1.17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SIN, Jeremiah 31.29. There was an old saying among the Jews that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. The proverb puts the responsibility for the sins of one generation upon the preceding generation. In Jeremiah's day the people were complaining that they were being punished, not for their own sins but for the sins of an earlier generation. In the future, Jeremiah declared, individual responsibility would be recognized, a man would realize that he was judged for his own sins, not for those of others, and this proverb would no longer be repeated. The fathers had sinned, but the children had sinned, too, and the children would be held responsible for their own sins. To express this, Jeremiah amended the proverb to read, Every man that eateth the sour grapes, *his* teeth shall be set on edge.

Most people like to lay the blame for their misfortunes or faults upon anyone or anything rather than upon themselves. It is the fault of circumstances that they are not more successful in life. It is their unfortunate heredity that has made their character what it is. Some one else to bear the blame is "a long-felt want" of humanity. Jeremiah placed the blame where it usually belongs.

II. THE NEW COVENANT BETWEEN GOD AND HIS PEOPLE, Jeremiah 31.31-34. "These verses are among the most important in the Old Testament. In the year 86 B.C., when Jerusalem was destroyed, men thought that the old covenant between Jehovah and his people was ended. Jeremiah says that the Lord is about to establish the religion of the nation on a new foundation. A covenant differs from a promise in that the carrying out of the agreement made by one party depends upon the fulfilling of a condition by the other party. This new covenant will not be like the covenant made with their fathers when they were led out of Egypt. That covenant they broke; Jehovah did not. The margin of the Bible gives the translation, "Although I was lord over them" for "Although I was a husband unto them": both translations imply Jehovah's claim to their obedience.

The new covenant will be more permanent because of its spiritual nature. It will not be written upon stone, but upon the hearts of the people, wrought into the very structure of thought and will. There will be a complete change in the method of approach to God. No longer will there be need of clergy or ritual, but every one will have direct fellowship with God. So Jesus declared in John IV: "The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth." For God will forgive their iniquity, and will re-

member their sin no more. "Under the new covenant the sense of forgiveness ensures a willing service based on love, not on fear. God comes to man as giving, and not as requiring."

"A new covenant was needed. And for Jeremiah to see the need was to be sure of its ultimate fulfilment; so sure of it that he could announce it. Inscribed stones were no good. All the past was the proof of that. The great words must be written on men's brains. When the Hebrew said *heart* he did not think of the emotions, but of the thought, the purpose, the will, the whole mind of man. There, at the center of his own personal life, the covenant was to be enshrined. There would then be no need of instruction; no priests to give their authoritative Torah to ignorant and easily misguided men. Each man would be his own authority, for each would be in close and personal touch with Jehovah himself. Then, and not until then, would sin be a thing of the past.

"It was a bold, and indeed an epoch-making, anticipation; so bold that some (needlessly, as we think) have doubted whether it could have come to Jeremiah at all. It contained within itself the denial not only of the authority of the written word, but of the whole traditional view of Jehovah's relation to the nation. If Jehovah were to write his ten words on the heart, he would have to deal with individuals. Such a dealing with individuals had never been made explicit before, or even, by most people, thought of as a possibility. Yet it is not difficult to see how Jeremiah was driven to it. With him, up to this time, as with every Hebrew, the covenant was a fixed idea. Jehovah dealt with his people by a solemn agreement. And that he would finally reject his people, Jeremiah could not as yet believe. If the covenant of stone were useless, some other covenant would have to be provided. Where could it be written, save in the heart of man? Probably Jeremiah did not understand all that his words implied. But the idea of individual responsibility had been anticipated in Josiah's law book itself, Dt. 24.16. For it contained a provision that no one was to be punished for the sins of his family. Jeremiah went much farther than Deuteronomy. A law written on the heart marks the whole transition from outward conformity to inward acceptance. It means that in Paul's sense the law, that is, the law 'written in ordinances, touch not, taste not,' and so on, is abolished six centuries before Paul. Jeremiah points to a time when men would not be under the law, but under grace" (W. F. Lofthouse, in Jeremiah and the New Covenant).

"The prophet's vision in regard to Israel was, of course, only an anticipation of the Kingdom of Christ. What he conceived in regard to Israel has never yet been fulfilled. But it has found fulfilment in that Kingdom which is not of this world. There each subject derives his life by union with the living Head. Everyone enters into direct personal relationship to him, and sustains the obligation of individual obedience. And therein each is independent of the other, while at the same time contributing to the common life and service. For he who is taught of the Lord needs not that any man should teach him. It is the glory indeed of the Christian life that every one of us is capable of an unique appreciation of his will, and of an unique interpretation of his to others. This is the true independence of the children of God, and the heritage which is ours to enjoy today" (J. Stuart Holden).

III. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE TWO DISPENSATIONS, John 1.17. Here in the prologue to John's Gospel we have the ministries of Moses and of Jesus put in opposition: Moses gave the law, but gave no power to obey it; Jesus Christ offers us grace and truth. "Law required; grace gives: law exposed and condemned sin; grace takes sin away and pardons it: law showed a partial glimpse of truth, it was a 'shadow of things to come'; the fulness could be only in him who is truth" (George Reith).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, saying, know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, Jeremiah 31.34. In ancient times men could only "know Jehovah" and ascertain his will by resorting to some sanctuary, where the priests preserved and transmitted the sacred tradition and delivered the divine oracles. Written codes scarcely altered the situation: copies would be few and far between, and still mostly in the custody of priests. Whatever drawbacks arise from attaching supreme religious authority to a

printed book were multiplied a thousandfold when codes could only be copied by hand. But, in the New Israel, men's spiritual life would not be at the mercy of scribe and priest. The man who had a code and could read would no longer be able, with the self-importance of exclusive knowledge, to bid his less fortunate brethren to know Jehovah. Jehovah himself would be the one Teacher, and his instruction would fall, like the sunshine and the rain, upon all hearts alike.—C. J. Ball.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

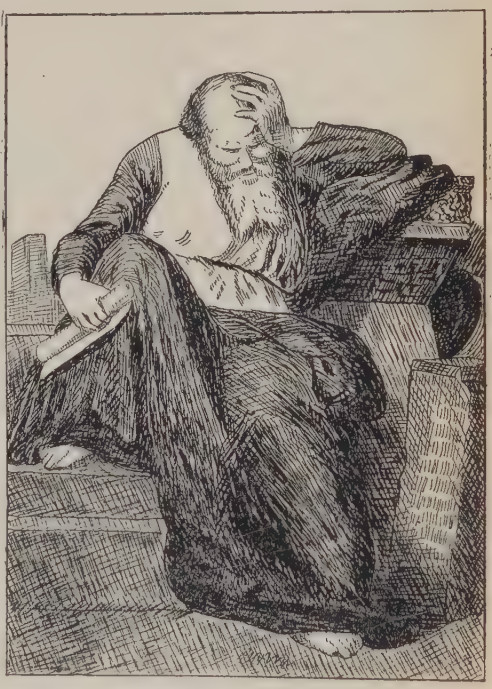
The Background of Jeremiah 31.29-34

The two addresses which we have had from Jeremiah have been gloomy: they have threatened dire punishment upon the people if they did not amend their ways. Today we have a wholly different message from our prophet. Chapters thirty to thirty-three give an address of good cheer in which Jeremiah "speaks comfortably" to his people, assures them that they shall not perish, that through them Gentile nations shall be led to a knowledge of the true God, that a Righteous Branch shall yet come from the house of David, and Zion shall be called The Lord our righteousness, 33.16.

It was a time of great anxiety. Jerusalem was in the grip of famine and pestilence, the prospects for the city were sad in the extreme, and Jeremiah himself was a prisoner. See The Historical Background of Lesson XI. Yet under these circumstances "the prophet of woe," as he is often called, issues his cheering, hopeful message. The love of Jehovah will manifest itself in the restoration.

The Background of John 1.17

The prologue of John's Gospel, verses one to eighteen of the first chapter, summarizes the whole Gospel: it declares that the Word was God, that he was made man, and that he revealed the Father.



Jeremiah Mourning over Jerusalem
From a painting by Edward Bendemann

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

GOD'S LAW IN THE HEART

Beginning the Lesson

In verses twenty-nine and thirty we see reflected the popular sullen and cynical criticism of God. It was a common saying among the Jews that Jehovah was unjust. A man might sin and yet remain prosperous. His innocent offspring, however, would be made to suffer (compare Ex. 34.7, John 9.2). Jeremiah, however, announces in the name of Jehovah that this will not always be so, but that a new covenant will be made, an essential part of which will be the rectification of this. How? Will the order of nature be altered? Will all the results of sin accrue inevitably to the sinner? No, God does not propose an alteration of the natural sequence of events. The basis of the new covenant is spiritual (verse 33), and consists in a deepened spiritual insight and a quickened conscience. People who

have a purely material view of religion conceive it as a means of securing material benefits either in this life or the next—better harvests, safety from enemies, the pleasures of heaven. To them the prosperity of the wicked seems almost blasphemous. Those, however, who have a profounder understanding of life, and so of religion, know that the great realities belong to another realm. Full larders, cash balances, and popularity are things with which we only have to do for a time. But there is an eternal life.

The eternal life comes into our life in our relations with God, who is eternal. This the Jews always understood. They could not get on without some evidence of God's presence with them. It was the knowledge that Moses had met with God that made them submit to his rule. When Moses seemed to have deserted them at Sinai they clamored for some other representative of Jehovah, even if it be but a golden calf (Ex. 32). The temple was sacred for them, because they believed God to dwell in it, and the law gained its authority because it enabled obedience to God. The law linked them with the eternal. But it linked them by means of outward acts—stiff and inflexible, and liable to become a chain, not admitting of that freedom and growth which should characterize the life with God. If the law is an advance on the golden calf, it is, nevertheless, not the perfect thing, and it is outward almost as definitely as the calf itself. It did not satisfy them. But what could satisfy them?

Jeremiah understood the mind and purpose of God in this matter. True, he was deeply interested in the law. He had keenly and enthusiastically sided with Josiah in his attempted legal reformation. But (perhaps because he had seen so clearly the failure of the reformation) he saw that there must be something better than that in store. And then at one swift leap he realized it. The true relation with God must be spiritual and not legal, just as the true understanding of life must be spiritual and not material. Consequently a new covenant is needed. The inadequate tables of stone must make way for laws written in the heart. The difficulties of priesthood and the understanding and interpretation of the law will then all vanish. God will be able to direct souls by his own inspiration.

The disposition on the part of the people of God which this demands is love. Only in loving hearts can God write as Jeremiah would have him write. For a heart without love is a heart of stone that resists the divine pencil. Jesus Christ then makes the fulfillment of this prophecy possible in that he wins us to love the Father.—Newton H. Marshall, in The British Weekly.

The New Covenant

The inner law, written on the heart, is in contrast to Mosaic ordinances. It has, therefore, two essential characteristics: first, it governs life, not by fixed external regulations, but by the continual control of heart and conscience by the divine Spirit; secondly, obedience is rendered to the divine Will, not from external compulsion, but because man's inmost nature is possessed by entire loyalty to God. The new law lays stress on the spiritual nature of man's relation to God, and therefore on the fact that God is a spiritual and moral Being. When man's obedience is claimed on the ground of God's irresistible power, and appeal is made to material rewards and punishments, God's personality is obscured and the way is opened for the deification of political or material Force. This doctrine of setting aside of ancient codes by the authority of the inner law is implied in many passages of the Book of Jeremiah. But we must not, of course, suppose that these principles —of obedience from loyal enthusiasm, and of the guidance of heart and conscience by the spirit of Jehovah—were new to the religion of Israel. The novelty of Jeremiah's teaching is that these principles are made central in the New Covenant.—C. J. Ball, in The Expositor's Bible.

God Speaks to the Soul through the Conscience

As man has a faculty which enables him to appreciate the beautiful in art or nature, so he has a faculty which enables him to appreciate truth and rectitude in life. Just in the measure in which his appreciation of the beautiful in art is cultivated, will be cultivated a distaste, a dislike, an abhorrence for that which is not beautiful, which violates the standards of art. Just in the measure in which his appreciation of truth and rectitude in life is cultivated, there will be developed in him a distaste, a dislike, an abhorrence for that which is untrue and unrighteous. If he loves that which is good, he will abhor that which is evil. This faculty or power in man which enables him to appreciate the true and the good, and which

makes the untrue and the evil abhorrent to him, we call conscience. It is a natural faculty, capable of being rightly educated, and also capable of being miseducated; but it is none the less true that through this natural faculty God speaks to the soul concerning the true and the right, as through the natural faculty of taste he speaks to the soul concerning the beautiful.—Lyman Abbott, in The Outlook.

The Voice of God in the Heart

It is not through similitudes, but by the Voice of God in the heart, that man becomes aware of God, says Moses. "Ye heard the voice of words" (Dt. 4.12); and language implies personality. This statement reverberates through the entire Bible. It is a Voice which Adam hears in Eden, revealing to him not only God but his own soul. It is a Voice which Job hears, piercing the tumult of his long debate; "There was silence, and I heard a Voice saying, 'Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?'" It is a Voice which Elijah hears when the earthquake and the fire and the wind have passed, a still small voice, saying, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" This Voice speaks in every man, clear or distant, faint or authoritative. Call it conscience, call it moral intuition, call it the soul, call it what you will: it is a spirit witnessing to our spirit, a voice of words, creating in us belief in a personal God. It tells us that there are certain acts and tempers which are Godlike, and others which insult the divinity of our own natures. Every aspiration after virtue which I feel, every act of deliberate right doing which I achieve, every onward-looking thought which goes beyond material things, every mood of prayer or faith, is the witness of God in the heart. Similitudes may deceive me. I may gain some faint adumbration of God from the majesty of the starry heaven or the marvelous adaptations of Nature, but it goes no farther than suggesting an infinite Artificer and Artist. But here is something that persists when my logic is dismayed and my philosophy has broken down; a proof of God which abides when all other proofs have failed; the voice of God in the heart, the inner witness. "Ye saw no similitudes, but ye heard a Voice of words."—From a Sermon by W. J. Dawson.

Legislation in the Heart

It is commonly (and it seems to me justifiably) said of Americans today that they think they can legislate the coming of the millennium. Certainly one of the first remarks you hear when men discuss any particular evil is: "There ought to be a law about that."

But what good is a law written on the books until it becomes also written in the people's hearts? Law as an external force may be serviceable to reduce a recalcitrant minority to conformity. But nothing is surer than the futility of legislation contrary to the public conscience. Witness the fugitive slave law in Civil War days.

Precisely so is it in ecclesiastical affairs. To endeavor to lead men by means of an external law which cannot be transcribed on the heart is utter folly. To attempt to enforce conformity in ritual or theology apart from the heart's response is intolerable tyranny.

Despite the furious activity of ecclesiastical politicians in the Church and would-be dominant groups in the Republic, the honest man in Church and State will always be more interested in unity than in conformity, and will recognize that the foundation stone of legislation is education.

Neither in family, church nor state can you legislate the millennium. That is why religion will always be the most important thing in the world. It writes its laws in the heart.—Henry van Dyke, in Light My Candle.

For Bible Class Discussion

What is conscience but that summit of our nature where it touches God?—Horace Bushnell.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What was the fate of Jehoiakim? 2. Of Jehoiachin? 3. How did Zedekiah gain the throne of Judah? 4. By what symbols did Jeremiah enforce his counsels? 5. What persecutions did Jeremiah endure? 6. How could he have avoided them? 7. Is he who says, "My country, right or wrong," a traitor or a patriot? 8. How was Galileo persecuted, and what did he say after he recanted? 9. When the Salvation Army began to exhort and pray on the streets of our great cities, how were some of them treated?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

GOD'S LAW IN THE HEART

Beginning the Lesson

A missionary in Brazil once saw a monkey sitting on a log and cracking nuts with a stone. The monkey's attention was attracted to the man, and this so interfered with the accuracy of his aim that a blow fell upon his tail which was curled around him. With a scream of rage the monkey hurled the stone at the man and ran off. No doubt it comforted him to hold the missionary to blame for his suffering. Have you ever known a boy or girl like that monkey in putting the blame upon some one else which really belonged to him or her? To do this is a common trait of humanity.

So common was it in the far-off times we are studying that there was a well-known proverb which ran, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." How did Jeremiah amend the proverb, verse 30? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

In thine Heart Will I Write It

From the inner reaches of New York harbor, out through "The Narrows" to where deep water begins, there is a channel which is called "The Ambrose Channel." It is sixteen miles long. It is not so very wide. For ships, in storm and fog, it is not so very easy to navigate. There is danger upon either side. Every method known to the harbor authorities of setting up lighthouses and installing bell-buoys had been tried, up to a few years ago. Yet in spite of them all, owing to the dangers on either side, many vessels came to grief.

Then some one suggested laying an electric cable right in the center of this channel and energizing it with what is called "An alternating current of electricity," from the shore. It was done. This cable, like the channel, is sixteen miles long.

This cable emits sound waves. Ships equipped with audiphones, or listening devices, attached to the hull, pick up the sounds sent out by the cable until by their strength they know they are right over the cable. Now, no matter how thick the fog or how black the night or how hard the storm, they follow this cable to safety. No danger of shipwreck or harm now, no possibility of it. It is the ship's conscience.

God has given to every boy and girl, every man and woman, individual consciences. Each conscience, as long as life lasts, tells what is right and what is wrong. "My conscience also bearing me witness." No one departs from the good and seeks the evil but the conscience, energized by God, gives warning. No one attempts to follow the right but the conscience is felt to inwardly approve. No matter in what perplexities we may be, this conscience, if we will listen, will guide us to safety.

Why do we find wrecks of boys and girls and of men and women? It is because those who become wrecks have refused to obey the inner voice.

Seek to keep constantly in touch with your conscience, as the ship keeps constantly in touch with this electric cable, in order to avoid damages and come safely into port.—Henry T. Sell, in Five Minute Sermons in Objects.

Thy Word have I Laid up in My Heart

One day I made a visit to West Point on the Hudson River, to the great military training school of our United States. Going by steamboat from New York City I landed at a dock at the foot of a steep hill up which I had to climb to reach the buildings of the Academy on top. The buildings, for all sorts of purposes, were very interesting, as was also the parade ground where the cadets were drilling.

The building which surprised and interested me most—it was on the highest point and the largest and most ornate of all—was the West Point church. It was not called "church," but "chapel." My surprise was in not expecting to see, at a purely military school, so much made of the church.

I was anxious to see the inside of the chapel. The inside was the same as any building of this sort except the battle flags—some of them old and tattered—hanging from the side-walls.

As soon as I was inside my attention was at once arrested by the great stained glass window at the farther end, which seemed to occupy about all the space. This window was in three sections. In the center of each section was a single word. The first section, to the left, had the word "Duty." The middle section, the word "Honor." The third section "Country." The words seemed to blaze with light.

Every cadet marshalled into chapel sees these words the first thing. They remain

constant through the service. That was the intention in placing these words that the cadet might see them and not only see them but hide them in his heart, that they might remain ever before him wherever he might be.

The Bible is like a great cathedral with immense stained glass windows. When we go inside there are not only these words of "Duty," "Honor" and "Country," but also "Love the Lord Your God" and "Love Your Fellow Man." We cannot always be reading the Bible but we can so hide it in our hearts that its words and precepts will remain constant in our hearts and guide us in all we do.—Henry T. Sell.

In Northwestern Canada the Church Missionary Society of England carries on a very successful missionary work among the Indians. When the first missionary came, the Indians were very hostile. A chapel was built and the Indians came in force to destroy it. They tore up the Bibles, hacked the building with axes and crowbars, and finally set it on fire. The chief of the tribe was afterwards converted, and then he made this confession: "From the night when we destroyed that church onward, I dreaded the Spirit of God. Out on the ocean, or where the snowpeaks looked out over the seas, there the Spirit of God followed me, and I was afraid, and when I hunted along those peaks, the Spirit of God hunted me, and I was afraid."

The conscience is the organ through which the Spirit of God makes known to us his way, and declares what is right and what is wrong. "The more refined and highly trained is the organ, the more exquisite will be its precepts. The greater sensitiveness of the telephonic receiver has vivified the charms and the detail of the message."

We have wills of our own. By our wills we make our choices. "Conscience comes forward, and in virtue of the power which God has given to it, claims to guide those wills. It points to what is right and says, 'choose that.' It points to what is wrong and says, 'Avoid that!' God has put the scepter of our lives in the hands of conscience. Conscience is for you and me the voice of God."

We Can Know the Voice of God in our Hearts

In our soul God is constantly speaking to us—he warns us against evil, he exhorts and encourages us to good. Suppose a boy has done another a bad turn. The one who has been wronged has been brooding over his wrongs, when suddenly he learns something about his companion, the knowledge of which by others will do him immense harm. He will have his revenge, he thinks; but while he is comforting himself in this way, a voice is heard, soft but most persistent, saying to him: "It is a mean thing that which you have in mind to do, it is a cruel thing; don't return blow for blow, leave him to this thoughts, keep your own unstained." That is the voice of God.

Perhaps you are out somewhere bent upon your own amusement, when you see some sad accident happen. Your first impulse, after you have gratified your curiosity, is to go after your own pleasure, shut from your mind the thought of the sufferings of others, and just follow the rule of "everybody for himself." But then you hear a voice saying: "What are the pleasures you give up compared with the suffering you might help to relieve? Come, make some sacrifice for the good of others, and don't think all your time misspent because it isn't spent upon yourself." That, too, is the voice of God in your soul, urging you on to be unselfish and merciful.—Simeon Singer.

Sentence Sermons

Yet still there whispers the small voice within,
Heard through God's silence, and o'er glory's din,
Whatever creed be taught, or land be trod,
Man's conscience is the oracle of God.—Byron.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What danger was threatening Jerusalem? 2. Why was Jeremiah hated? 3. Why was he cast into prison? 4. When should one tell disagreeable truths? 5. Was Jeremiah's patriotism more difficult than the patriotism which leads one to fight for his country? 6. Did it require courage for Ebed-melech to do what he did? 7. Who uttered the words of our Golden Text? 8. Write two columns of contrasting adjectives or phrases, the first column containing those applicable to Zedekiah, the second those applicable to Jeremiah. (Afraid—Brave; Weak—Strong; Irresolute—Steadfast; Shifting in policy—Firm of purpose; Disobedient to God—Obedient to God; Luxurious—Suffering; Honored—Scorned, etc.)

LATER EXPERIENCES OF JEREMIAH

GOLDEN TEXT: Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Matthew 5.11

LESSON Jeremiah 20.1-6; 37.1 to 38.28; 43.1-7 DEVOTIONAL READING Matthew 5.3-11

JEREMIAH 38.4 Then the princes said unto the king, Let this man, we pray thee, be put to death; forasmuch as he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. 5 And Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you. 6 Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchijah the king's son, that was in the court of the guard: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire; and Jeremiah sank in the mire.

7 Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch, who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon (the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin), 8 Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, 9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die in the place where he is, because of the famine; for there is no more bread in the city. 10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. 11 So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence rags and worn-out garments, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. 12 And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these rags and worn-out garments under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. 13 So they drew up Jeremiah with the cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE PRINCES FEAR THE INFLUENCE OF JEREMIAH AND SEEK HIS DEATH, verse 4. Jeremiah was held a prisoner in the guard-house at Jerusalem during its siege by the Babylonians. See The Historical Background. He could still address those around him, and he prophesied the fall of the city and advised surrender. The effect of his words was to weaken the courage and purpose of the fighting power of the people. The princes denounced him to the king as one whose words weakened the defense of the city. "Let this man be put to death," they urged, for "he seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt."

"So, then, am I become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Paul).

II. JEREMIAH IS CAST INTO A DUNGEON, verses 5, 6. "He is in your hands," said the weak king, and with this gesture of helplessness acknowledged that he could not withstand them; they could do with Jeremiah as they would. "He was afraid of Jeremiah, afraid of God, afraid of his princes, afraid of his enemies, afraid even to be himself" (Emily Huntley). "Zedekiah miserably vacillated between listening to the prophet's counsels of surrender and the truculent nobles' advice to resist to the last gasp. Like most weak men, he was afraid to do right, and fancied that he was compelled by the force of circumstances to do wrong. So he drifted and drifted, and at last was smashed to fragments on the rocks, as all men are who do not keep a strong hand on the helm and a steady eye on the compass. The winds are good servants but bad masters" (Alexander Maclaren).

"To be weak is to be miserable" (Milton).

There were no aqueducts nor wells in Jerusalem, and the city was undermined with cisterns for holding rain water. Into one of these, underneath the guardhouse of the palace, the dungeon of Malchijah the king's son, they let Jeremiah down with cords. The water had all been used, and Jeremiah sank down into the sediment at the bottom. Here his enemies left him to die. It has been conjectured that Psalm sixty-nine may have been composed by Jeremiah at this time:

I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing;
Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink:
And let not the pit shut its mouth upon me.

"It is impossible to read this story without admiration for the man who dared to stand alone with God against a nation in arms. It makes us think of Judson, pursuing his work for the salvation of Burmah amid the treachery and hostility of the king; of Moffat, going alone and unarmed into the territory of the terrible Africander; of John Hunt amid the ferocious cannibals of Fiji; of John G. Paton, who persevered amid fifty attempts to take his life. Surely the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Our duty is to see to it that we are on God's plan and doing his work; to wrap around our souls the sense of his presence; to keep our ears open to the perpetual assurance, 'I am with thee to deliver thee'" (F. B. Meyer).

III. JEREMIAH IS RESCUED, verses 7-13. When an Ethiopian eunuch named Ebed-melech heard of Jeremiah's state he sought out the king, who was then holding court in the gate of Benjamin, and told him what had been done to Jeremiah, denounced the deed as evil, and declared that the prophet would die, for the famine was great in the city and no one would give him anything to eat. A "daily loaf" had been allowed him when he was imprisoned before, Jer. 37.21. The king then gave Ebed-melech a guard of thirty men to rescue Jeremiah. He returned with them to the dungeon, and had ropes covered with soft rags and worn-out garments to protect his armpits let down for Jeremiah to put under his arms; by their means he was drawn up out of his prison.

"It is Ebed-melech, a foreigner, not one of the chosen people, a palace official knowing well what vengeance he himself may be exposed to, who appeals to the irresolute king and rescues Jeremiah from his miserable condition. Religion is not a thing of the skin. Augustine may declare that the virtues of pagans are but 'splendid vices'—but this is not the attitude even of the Old Testament, let alone of Christ. God's grace has as free an entry into the heart of Samaritans as into the heart of the Jew, and Ebed-melech is moved to kindness when Jews are cruel. Every man is capable of love and holiness, and we should reverence every man as a potential saint" (Newton H. Marshall).

And Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard. "This was a part of the court surrounding the palace which was railed off in which to guard those prisoners whom it was not desired to throw into a common dungeon; their friends had free access to them, but they might not pass beyond the area in which they were confined" (Dean Stanley).

IV. JEREMIAH'S LIFE DURING THE SIEGE. "One more secret interview the prophet had with the king, carefully concealed from the imperious nobles, and was then remanded to his former state prison, where he remained secluded during the rest of the siege, though with a certain amount of freedom, and with the companionship of his faithful Baruch. Two striking scenes enlivened this solitude. One was his grateful remembrance of his Ethiopian benefactor, whose safety in the coming troubles he positively predicted. The other was his interview with his cousin Hanameel. He was sitting in the open court which enclosed the prison, with many of the citizens of Jerusalem round him. Suddenly his cousin entered with the offer, startling at that moment of universal confusion, to sell the ancestral plot of ground at their native Anathoth, of which, in the fall of their family, Jeremiah was the last and nearest heir. Had the prophet been less assured of the ultimate return of his people, he might well have hesitated at a proposal which seemed only like the mockery that he had before encountered from his townsmen. But he felt assured that the present cloud would pass away, and, with a noble confidence which has often been compared to that of the Roman senator who bought the ground occupied by the camp of Hannibal, formally purchased the field in the presence of Baruch and the assembled Jews; and then broke out, once again, first in prose and then in poetry, into the expressions of his perfect conviction that, after the misery of siege and captivity, the land of Palestine should be again peaceably bought and sold, and that for all future ages the royal family of David and the Levitical tribe should exercise their functions in a spirit of justice never before known within the

walls of Jerusalem. It is not the only time in the history of States and Churches that he who has been denounced as a deserter and traitor, becomes in the last extremity the best comforter and counsellor. Demosthenes, who had warned his fellow-countrymen in his earlier days against their excessive confidence, in his later days was the only man who could reassure their excessive despondency. Herder, who in his earlier days had been attacked by contemporary theologians as a heretic, was, as years rolled on, invoked as their only help against the rising tide of unbelief. Let all such, in every age, accept the omen of the mingled darkness and light which marks the vicissitudes of the career of Jeremiah" (Dean Stanley).

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Doom which Jeremiah Foretold rapidly Approached

For a long time the great power in the East had been Assyria, but towards the end of the seventh century B.C. the great Assyrian lion (Isa. 5.29) was in his death gasps, and a new power from southern Babylonia rapidly gained the ascendency. This power was the Chaldeans, who, though often conquered by Assyrian and Babylonian armies, had finally moved from the lowlands around the head of the Persian Gulf to the lower Euphrates and Tigris rivers. They were united under Nabopolassar, who had seized Babylon, and their nation became known as the New Babyonian Empire. Together with the Medes, who dwelt northeast of the Tigris, they attacked and conquered Nineveh, the great capital of the Assyrian Empire, in 607 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, the son of Nabopolassar, started westward with a large army bent on conquest. In the fourth year of Jehoiakim he defeated Necho, king of Egypt, at the battle of Carche-mish (605) by the Euphrates. "With the retreat of Necho the whole country was left open to the invading army. The whole land trembled. Like a whirlwind, like a torrent, they swept on.

Representation of a Tragic Poet Dictating to an Amanuensis

"Once more Jeremiah became the center of interest. What course would he, the prophet of the age, take in the face of this impending calamity? He foresaw, on the one hand, that the immediate pressure of Babylon was irresistible; but, on the other hand, that it could not last. It was not indifference to his country, but attachment to its permanent interests, with the yet larger consequences wrapped up in them, which induced him to counsel submission. The warning words which he had uttered at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign he now repeated with more determined energy as the crisis drew nearer."

It was when he could no longer speak to the people that Jeremiah had recourse to dictating his message to Baruch, who wrote it down and then, at the prophet's direction, read it in the temple. When his words were repeated to King Jehoiakim, he ordered Jehudi to get the roll and read it to him and the assembled princes. Only three or four leaves had been read when the king in his anger seized the roll, cut it and threw it into the burning brazier before him. Jeremiah dictated it again to Baruch and added to it further.

The Fate of Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin

Six years after he burned Jeremiah's roll, Jehoiakim's eleven-year-rule came to an end, but the manner of his death is obscure. See 2 K. 24.6 and 2 Ch. 36.6. Three months later Nebuchadnezzar came and beseiged Jerusalem, 597 B.C., plundered the temple of its sacred vessels, and according to 2 Ch. 26.6 (but see 2 K. 24.6), carried Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin, who had been king meanwhile, away into exile in Babylon with the different officials of his court and other notables and the leading craftsmen and their families, at least twenty thousand in all. "Those taken into exile were like good figs, while those left were as the bad figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so bad," said Jeremiah, Jer. 24.1-10.

The Reign of Zedekiah, the Siege of Jerusalem, and the Imprisonment of Jeremiah

Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah, a brother of Jehoiakim, on the throne as his vassal, Zedekiah reigned 597-586 B.C. For four or five years he remained submissive to his Chaldean master. The prophet Ezekiel (chapter 8) gives a picture of the idolatry that prevailed in Jerusalem at this time. In 588 Hophra became Pharaoh of Egypt and Zedekiah plotted with that monarch to help him cast off his yoke of bondage. Nebuchadnezzar suddenly appeared and began a siege of Jerusalem. The Egyptian army moved to its relief. Nebuchadnezzar raised the siege to attack the Egyptians. Zedekiah and his courtiers seem to have believed that their foe would retreat as Sennacherib had in the days of Zedekiah. He sent two of his officers to Jeremiah to ask the prophet to intercede with Jehovah. Jeremiah sent back word to the king that the Babylonians would return and that the capture of Jerusalem was certain.

An Oriental Brazier

During the interval that the raising of the siege permitted, Jeremiah was leaving the city by the north gate, to visit his native city of Anathoth, when he was arrested by the officer on duty on the absurd charge of intending to desert to the Chaldeans. He was dragged into the presence of the princes, and then was beaten and imprisoned. During this imprisonment the king sent for him secretly only to be told by the prophet that he, the king, would be taken captive. Jeremiah asked that he might not be sent back to his dungeon, and Zedekiah had him placed in the guard-court (court of the guard).

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

There is a Japanese proverb which says, "Happy the man upon whom the divine mantle of the story-teller has fallen." All teachers of Intermediate Grade pupils —and of older pupils as well—must covet that mantle, but if it has not fallen upon them they know that with practice they can learn to create one for themselves.

Many of the lessons this Quarter are interesting stories which need only a little amplification on the teacher's part to hold any class. Study the technique of Lettice Bell's story-telling, as given under the second topic.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

FORMS OF MODERN PERSECUTION

Beginning the Lesson

Dr. Maclaren calls Zedekiah "The archaic Mr. Facing-bothways." He was, in truth, a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. Both his conduct of national affairs and his treatment of Jeremiah show this. He had neither strength of character nor force of will. He believed that Jehovah was the God of Israel and that Jeremiah was his prophet, and he was influenced by Jeremiah when he was with him—but when away from the prophet he was the tool of the princes who hated Jeremiah.

Follow him in his treatment of the prophet. He begs Jeremiah to pray for him, but will not heed his message from God. Jeremiah is imprisoned and Zedekiah seeks his counsel, but secretly, for fear of the princes. At the petition of Jeremiah he transfers him from the house of Jonathan, the scribe, to the court of the guard.

The princes petition him to let them put Jeremiah to death, and he gives them permission, saying: "Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you." Poor Zedekiah, he is nothing but a double-minded king, and it is a time when the nation especially needs a king who can say in Shakespeare's words:

I am as constant as the Northern star,
Of whose true-fixed, resisting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament.

The princes put Jeremiah in a foul dungeon and leave him there to starve to death. Ebed-melech begs the king to rescue Jeremiah, and the king directs him to remove the prophet from the dungeon to the court of the guard. Then the king has another secret interview with Jeremiah, but will not follow Jeremiah's counsel because, he says, he is afraid of the Jews that are fallen away to the Chaldeans, lest they mock him, and he begs the prophet not to let the princes know of their interview. Poor, vacillating king!

Chrysostom and Jeremiah

Chrysostom had incurred the displeasure of the emperor, Arcadius, by too great frankness in reproving him for his sins. The emperor, unable to devise a form of punishment which seemed adequate to express his indignation, took counsel with his courtiers.

"Exile him!" cried one. "What good will that do?" asked the emperor. "He looks upon the whole world as his fatherland."

"Confiscate his property," suggested a second. "Whom will that harm?" asked the emperor. "Not Chrysostom, but only the poor to whom he gives all that he has."

"Cast him into prison," proposed a third. "What would be the use?" retorted Arcadius. "He would glory in his chains."

"Well, then, kill him, kill him!" cried all the courtiers at once. "How would that help?" asked the emperor. "It would simply open the gates of heaven to him. Think of something else."

"We must try to make him sin," murmured one courtier, thoughtfully, "Chrysostom is afraid of nothing but sin."

Jeremiah was like Chrysostom in the courage of his convictions, in fearing nothing that king or princes could do to him, in being afraid only of sin.

What persecutions did Jeremiah have to endure?

Forms of Modern Persecution

Martyrdom did not cease with the closing of the iron doors of the Most Christian Inquisition, with the *auto da fé* in Catholic Spain, or with the horrible burnings of men and women at Smithfield in Protestant England. Stephen was not stoned by benighted and cruel pagans, but by the most orthodox established church. No sinner is so abandoned as a backsliding Christian; no sin is so hateful as apostasy; no quarrel is so bitter as a family quarrel. The heathen, fighting for the only gods and the only religions they had,—false and unworthy as those gods and religions were,—were no more deliberate in their cruelty toward the teachers and disciples of the new religion than were the teachers in the orthodox church against their Christian brethren.

And in all the ages bigotry has not changed its nature. It still lays more stress on a hyphen than on the whole Sermon on the Mount. It has not changed name or nature. Bigotry will be bigotry, in and out of the Church,—and there is more of it outside than there is inside,—until it is burned to ashes in the hot flames of its own vindictiveness. While we remember the persecutions of the Christians and the sufferings of the martyrs, let us remember also that "pagan Rome" was not a sinner above Christian Rome; that Nero beheaded Paul, but he did not burn Severus; Domitian did not burn Savonarola; Marcus Aurelius, one of the bitterest of the pagan persecutors, did not burn Anne Askew at Smithfield.

And ourselves,—you and I are good Christians,—do we ever grip some tender heart with the red-hot pincers of a cruel sarcasm? Have we ever in our minds a hateful thought heating itself into a bitter word? Is there any one in "our" church whom we are inclined to persecute unless they change their views on some polysyllabic doctrine until it conforms to our own? Is there no one among our own brethren whom we sometimes "talk about"? Ah, friends, the heart is more

sensitive than the body. A broken heart aches longer than a crushed hand. A tender, wounded spirit quivers with anguish that the body broken at the wheel and beaten with rods never felt. And among those under the throne of God, crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" there are some who were beaten to death three thousand years ago; and some who were burned and some who were crucified two thousand years ago; and some, it may be, who went up from "our own church" only a little while ago, with bodies unscarred and strong, but with hearts bleeding to death with spiteful little stabs and venomous little stings inflicted by that poisonous little serpent, the tongue. And we know some one who helped to kill them. Paul didn't throw any stones at Stephen. He did worse, and he knew it; and he acknowledged it.

If the story of the martyrs is written only to excite our pity and sympathy for people who have been happy and safe in heaven for several thousand years, it is a wasted lesson. They do not need our pity. And the persecutors are far out of the reach of our condemnation. These lessons are to make real and tender our love for the martyrs in our own circle of acquaintance. Lessons like this are to move us to convert the persecutors, most of whom come within the range of our personal influence—under our own absolute control, some of them.—Robert Burdette.

Blessed are They That have Been Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake: for Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven

We discover the meaning of persecution to have narrowed with the passing of centuries. Though some people have had their baptism of blood, even in modern days, the majority meet little persecution of the active kind. There is now no fire, or dungeon, or violent death, or spoiling of goods. But every reformer hears the hiss of the serpent, even if he does not feel its fangs. There are yet such things as moral martyrdom and social ostracism.

Against modern evils it is not easy to protest. It is not always easy to judge how best to do it. The temptation is to be silent, to let things take their course, to allow the moral sense of the community to correct abuses. We may forget that the moral sense of a community needs a single voice, and often becomes effective only when it finds it. The air may be full of electricity, but it needs the flash of fire to make it mighty. Concentrated thus, it becomes irresistible.

The meaning of persecution, reviling, evil-speaking, will differ as men differ in themselves, and in their stations and callings in life. The hard way will not be the same for a workman and a master, a maid and a mistress, a bachelor and a benedict, a child and a parent, a duke and a dustman, a statesman and a scavenger. Each one will find his crook in his lot as he sets himself to "follow the Christ, the King." The call to follow Christ reaches him where and as he is, and just there is the beginning of the hard path. And if he should find himself, metaphorically, where many of the early Christians were, literally—in the arena exposed to the howls of the wild beasts and the revilings of wilder men, let him remember that the experience is not without its joy and its reward.

Persecution is the price of progress. It is the world's reward for its benefactors; its present, not its ultimate, reward; for the hooted of today are the heroes of tomorrow. It is not long since, that Florence erected in a public place a statue in honor of its martyr, Savonarola. On that memorial are inscribed the words: "After four hundred years, Florence remembers." The recognition, though tardy, was deserved. To dream that God should govern Florence, or England, and that the city, or nation, would realize its higher destiny under such direct rule, is to dream along the line of God's ideal for every city, for every citizen, for every nation. His reward was persecution, reviling, scorn, hate, and death, often the lot of the reformer.

And the blessed—that is the happy—Christian, is he who, sure of his position, can endure opposition. Sure of the reversion of God, he can endure the aversion of men. Florence could remember Savanarola after four centuries; and, after life's agitated years, God will not forget.—Condensed from an Article in The Christian, by Allan Poole.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. In Jeremiah we have the test and the proof of the highest patriotism.

2. The problem of suffering. "Suffering has its undoubted purpose in the world.

When God framed the earth he deliberately so fashioned it as to make suffering inevitable—for reasons."

3. Nothing more forcibly marks the weakness of a bad cause than persecution.—Athanasius.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Who were the Rechabites? 2. How did they show themselves fanatical? 3. Why did Jonadab command his family always to dwell in tents and have nothing to do with agriculture? 4. Jeremiah used these Rechabites as an object lesson: for what purpose? 5. Of what devices did Jeremiah make use to enforce his counsels? 6. What are the benefits of total abstinence? 7. Why should every citizen of our land be willing to do without alcoholic beverages?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

STANDING TRUE IN HARD PLACES

Beginning the Lesson

What is our departmental topic? Jeremiah came to some very hard places in his life, but never once did his loyalty to God falter, never once did danger or suffering cause him to fail in delivering his message of warning.

Lettice Bell, in a book entitled The Boiling Cauldron brings the times vividly before us:

Submission to Babylon became more than ever the drift of all Jeremiah's preaching. "Nebuchadnezzar is God's tool. By him you are to be punished. Nothing can alter it. God has given him this land, and other lands, just as seemed meet to the Creator and Owner of the earth. All nations shall serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son after him, and his grandson after him. Those who refuse to serve Babylon will sorely regret it. Submission to him is the only thing that can help you." And in order that there should be no means lost to make the people understand this, Jeremiah had been down to the carpenter's shop for some pieces of wood.

The people wondered, and Jeremiah sat on the ground and worked. He made six yokes. Then he got up and, tying one firmly together, put it around his neck and walked off with the other five under his arm. He walked as far as the Red House, or palace. Then he waited outside. Inside the palace King Zedekiah was deep in council. For ambassadors had come to him from five surrounding kings, who, uniting together, invited Zedekiah to join himself to them. Before Nebuchadnezzar became so formidable a foe, these nations had always been fighting against Jehoiakim. Now they wanted to make friends with Israel. Together they might crush the dreaded Babylonian monarch. Separately each must be overcome.

With endless ceremony and bowing and scrapings, the foreign messengers at last were ushered out of the red gates. The prophet stepped forward, a striking figure in his plain dark garment among all the gay dresses and royal pomp.

"Here is a gift for your masters," he said, handing round his yokes, "one for the King of Edom, one for the King of Moab, one for the King of the Ammonites, one for the King of Tyre, and one for the King of Zidon. Take them with you and say to your Kings: 'Put the yoke around your neck and learn this: if you will submit to Nebuchadnezzar, all will be well; for the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the King of Babylon and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the Lord.' If you will not put your neck under the yoke of the King of Babylon then woe betide you."

Jeremiah wore that wooden yoke wherever he went, and never ceased to urge on all his hearers to submit to Nebuchadnezzar. But neither Zedekiah, nor his servants, nor the people of the land took any notice of what he said.

Instead, they sent secret ambassadors down to Egypt to ask Pharaoh-Hophra to help them, which Zedekiah had faithfully promised he would not do when Nebuchadnezzar had made him king. Zedekiah's promises did not count for more than his principles. Great hopes were raised in the threatened city when news came that Egypt had risen to the occasion. Pharaoh's army was on its way to their help.

"Well, Jeremiah," asked the King, "what do you say to this? Things look better. Surely you believe that God is going to help us now?" Jeremiah must have felt perplexed.

But God looked back to the day when Zedekiah had sworn to Nebuchadnezzar, and had given his hand in token of his promise, never to seek help or horses from

Egypt. Shall he prosper? Shall he escape that doeth such things? "No," said the Lord, "Pharaoh's army which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt, into their own land, and the Fierce Foe shall take Jerusalem."

Jeremiah repeated all this to the King. For a moment Zedekiah's face fell; but he looked out of the window at his soldiers, and he thought of the great army on its way, and he made up his mind he would not be frightened into surrender by the mad prophet.

And the very thing Zedekiah was looking for did happen. Hophra did come. Nebuchadnezzar retreated from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army. What could Jeremiah say now? Still only the same old warning, "Deceive not yourselves; Nebuchadnezzar shall return and burn this city with fire." Jeers met Jeremiah's declaration, and the city settled down again as if no judgment overshadowed it.

Sore at heart, Jeremiah walked down the narrow streets towards the Gate of Benjamin. Perhaps he meant to wander in the fields and speak to God, away from the taunts and jeers. He wanted to be alone, besides taking the opportunity to get in provisions.

In the gateway, on duty, was Captain Irijah, the grandson of Hananiah. The prophet, suspecting nothing, walked slowly towards the gate. A rough hand on his shoulder roused him, as he stepped beneath the archway. "You are caught now, Jeremiah," said the young Captain, "caught slipping away to the enemy, you traitor!"

"It is false," called out Jeremiah hotly. "No such thing."

All his protestations, all his explanations were useless. The Captain hearkened not to any. He only hurried his prisoner back to judgment, and Jeremiah, without a friend to stand by him, was cruelly beaten and cast into prison.

King Zedekiah's Weakness

We have a proverb about a rolling stone—what is it? What does it mean? Did you ever hear of a rolling plant? In South America there is a strange plant that never stays long in one place. It is blown along by the wind until it finds itself in a moist place; then it sends down its roots and becomes green, but when the moisture in the ground disappears it pulls up its roots, rolls itself up, and is blown to another spot. This rolling plant never amounts to much; after a short time it becomes a bundle of dry roots and dead leaves.

There are people so like this plant that they might be called rolling men or women, boys or girls. Their minds don't "stay put"; one day they want to do one thing, and the next day they want to do the opposite thing. One time they are resolved to do what is right, and very soon afterwards they are doing what is wrong. King Zedekiah was that sort of person. He was weak and irresolute. How did this trait of his work harm to the prophet Jeremiah? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Jeremiah Stood True in Hard Places

"The study of Jeremiah's character is of great interest. He has been called the prophet of 'the bleeding heart and the iron will.' He combined the most contradictory traits of character. His enduement was such that he did not omit duty, but to perform duty often caused him keen anguish of heart. He was naturally diffident, yet was made steadfast in the will of God. He was timid, yet spake boldly in the name of his God. He possessed intense national feeling, yet was possessed of broad views. He was a man of prayer. He was zealous for and obedient to God. He was often perplexed and sometimes despondent, yet was continually sustained by the grace of God. This combination of traits in Jeremiah is a strong proof of the divine origin of his vision.

"If the natural shrinking of his sensitive character is traceable in his own report of his conduct at particular junctures, does not the fact shed an intenser glory upon the man who overcame this instinctive timidity, and persisted in the face of the most appalling dangers, in the path of duty? Is not the victory of a constitutionally timid and shrinking character a nobler moral triumph than that of the man who never knew fear, who marches to the conflict with others with a light heart, simply because it is his nature to do so?"

One of the greatest heroes in the Old Testament is the prophet Jeremiah. He never failed to counsel submission to the Assyrians and Babylonians, though he knew he would be considered a traitor to his country; he never hesitated to foretell the doom that would befall temple and city if the nation continued in its evil course, though he knew he would be accused of blasphemy; he never flinched in his task

of rebuking kings and people, though he knew his word would bring upon himself hatred and persecution. There is a courage that will calmly face physical danger; Peter had it when he drew his sword to defend his Master in the Garden. There is a higher courage that will brave taunts or persecution in the doing of one's duty; Peter was lacking here when he quailed before the servant maid's question in the court of the high priest. Jeremiah had both physical and moral courage. Physical courage is desirable, but compared with moral courage it is as candle light to sunlight.

Jeremiah stood this test of a hero:

"Oh, it's easy to fight in the cause of the right,
When it's surely, steadily winning,
To nobly stand with a gallant band
While plaudits loud are dinning.
For nothing inspires and fans the fires
Of our noblest best endeavor,
Like knowing success will crown our best
And glory be ours for ever.

"But to stand with a few and yet be true
To a seemingly losing cause;
To fight for the right with all our might,
With never a note of applause;
To stand like a brave in the face of a grave,
O'erhung with the cloud of defeat,
This, this is the test of a hero, the best,
A hero we seldom meet."

Comfort and Duty

Results worth while cannot be secured by those who stop to see that they are comfortable before they go on to do their duty. We can see this in little things as well as in big ones. Suppose a boy wanted to play on a baseball team, and he should write the captain of the team a note like this—"I would like to play on your nine, but I do not like to play on summer days which are too hot, and I only like the easy balls batted at my place, and please do not let the pitcher throw them hard at me." Or suppose a man who wanted to go into the army should write the captain of the company and say, "I would like to enlist with you, and I am a very brave soldier. I will come into your company if you have soft beds and do not march too long at one time, and have plenty to eat, with a good cook." What sort of soldier do you think he would be?

And what sort of soldiers for God are boys and girls and men and women who really are not thinking much about God's battles, but of how to make themselves comfortable—who can never come to Sunday-school or church when it rains, or do the work they promised if it doesn't suit them, or ever really think hard and mean hard about God's business? They might just as well be counted out from amongst his soldiers, for they are not of the stuff that conquers. But everybody who really wants to, can count in his cause. And the way to do it is to let one's thoughts and prayers so dwell on the brave things which God has for us to do that no laziness nor self-indulgence will hold us back from doing them.—Walter Russell Bowie, in Sunny Windows.

Sentence Sermons

Courage isn't the last resort
In the work of life or the game of sport.
It isn't a thing that a man can call
At some future time when he's apt to fall.
If he hasn't it now, he will have it not
When the strain is great and the pace is hot,
For who would strive for a distant goal
Must always have courage within his soul.—Edgar A. Guest.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up and Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Who was Jonadab? (2 K. 10.15.) 2. How did the Rechabites live? 3. Why were they in Jerusalem? 4. How were the Rechabites tested? 5. What use did Jeremiah make of the way they stood the test? 6. What do you think of the steadfastness of the Rechabites?

LESSON X—JUNE 9

THE STORY OF THE RECHABITES (Temperance Lesson)

GOLDEN TEXT: We will drink no wine. Jeremiah 35.6

LESSON Jeremiah 35.1-19 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 107.1-9

JEREMIAH 35.5 And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites bowls full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. 6 But they said, We will drink no wine; for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for ever: 7 neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land wherein ye sojourn. 8 And so we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, or our daughters; 9 nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: 10 but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11 But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians; so we dwell at Jerusalem.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. JEREMIAH'S TEST OF THE RECHABITES, verses 1-5. "Among the people who crowded into Jerusalem to escape the dreaded Nebuchadnezzar, was a tribe that excited much curiosity because of its strange manners. The sheik's name was Jaasaniah—he whom Jehovah hears. They refused to shelter in the houses or permanent buildings, but pitched their dusky tents in an open space within the city walls. Their record was honorable, and reached far back into the early days of Hebrew history. From the wilderness march of the Exodus the Kenites kept up friendly relations with Israel during the intervening centuries, and it was of them that the Rechabites had sprung (Judges 4.17-24; 1 S. 15.6; 1 Ch. 2.55). About the time of Elijah, and perhaps through his influence, the leader of one branch of the tribe was Jonabad, the son of Rechab. He was dismayed at the abounding corruption of the Northern Kingdom, then under the fatal spell of Jezebel and Ahab. In his endeavor to save his people from such a fate, this man, afterwards Jehu's confederate in the extirpation of idolatry, bound his people under a solemn pledge to drink no wine for ever; and not to build houses, sow seed, or plant vineyards, but to dwell in tents" (F. B. Meyer).

These Rechabites and their stanch adherence to the principles laid down by their ancestor, afforded Jeremiah an excellent opportunity for an object lesson. Accordingly, he led them into one of the rooms ranged around the temple courts and bowls full of wine set before them, using the large vessels from which the wine was usually poured into cups. "Drink ye wine," Jeremiah bade them. It was a severe test of their principles, for it was the prophet himself who bade them drink.

"I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on" (Browning).

Assyrians Drinking Wine in Bowls

"On the shore of almost any lake you can find an allegory of human life. Farthest back from the line where the great opposing forces meet is the sand, tossed there because it is light. Then come the pebbles, which yield less readily. And finally, at the forefront, the solid rocks that the waters can neither break nor move."

II. THE RECHABITES REMAINED TRUE TO THEIR PRINCIPLES, verses 6-11. The Rechabites stood the test. "We will drink no wine," they declared. And the reason they gave was that Jonadab their father (ancestor) had commanded them saying, "ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons, for ever." More than two centuries had passed since Jonadab had laid his commands on his family, and during all this time he had been faithfully obeyed. They cited further commands of Jonadab: "Neither shall ye build house, now sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land wherein ye sojourn." These commands, too, they had kept, they said. It was an invasion, the coming of Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon upon the land, and the fear of the army of the Syrians that had forced them to leave the country for the greater security of the city.

The attitude of these Rechabites toward the life of the city was wrong, but there was ample justification for it in the time of Jonadab. The Cambridge Bible explains that "the settlement of Israel in Canaan, involving as it did the adoption of agricultural pursuits, led to a certain amount of recognition of local deities (Baals) supposed by the Canaanites to bestow the produce in return for appropriate rites. The adoption of such local rites was considered by the majority of the people as quite consistent with the worship of Jehovah as the national God or Baal, Lord. In this way the licentious practices connected with the service paid to the local Baals was extended to the worship of Jehovah himself. Jehu, in his blood-thirsty zeal for the extermination of the Tyrian Baal was supported by Jehonadab son of Rechab (2 K. 10.15), whose object in insisting upon his followers refusing an agricultural as opposed to a nomadic life was simply to maintain strict loyalty to Jehovah as the wilderness God, and to abolish all other worship."

"The Rechabites were really trying to set back the clock of history and of civilization, and their view of the ideal life was by no means shared by the great prophets of the Old Testament. The cry of the Rechabites was: 'This new civilization is essentially evil; back to the old ways. Cease to build houses, to plough, and sow and reap. Live in tents, care for your flocks and herds as your fathers did. Thus, and thus alone, will the purity of your faith be restored.' Not to go backward, as the Rechabites and other fanatical sects wish, but to carry into settled life all the worthiest convictions inherited from the past, and to recognize that social advance in spite of the perils it brings, is in accordance with the will of God—is the summons of the inspired messengers of the Eternal" (J. H. Rushbrooke).

III. THE PURPOSE OF JEREMIAH'S OBJECT LESSON, verses 12-14. Probably there was not one of the proud Israelites who did not look with contempt upon the Rechabites, considering himself far superior to those who dwelt in tents, and they were amazed when Jeremiah held up the example of the Rechabites as a profitable one for them to emulate. The moral was obvious. To this day the Rechabites drank no wine, in obedience to their father's instruction, and they, the Israelites, would not hearken to the words of their God. The Rechabites were loyal to the wish of an ancestor who was little more than a name to them, whereas, although God had "risen up early and spoken," and had "risen up early and sent his servants the prophets," Judah had not hearkened nor obeyed the law of the living God. So sure was Jeremiah that in all this he was carrying out the wish of God that he spoke of God as commanding the test and declaring the application.

"The first and most fundamental principle of Christianity is an intention to please God in all our actions. It is because the generality of Christians have no such intention that they fall so short of true devotion" (William Law).

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

The first efforts for prohibition more than a half century ago were quickly and strikingly successful. Many states passed laws prohibiting the liquor traffic. Complete victory seemed just at hand. But no reform can safely outgrow its own educational preparation. The right foundation had not been laid. A period of reaction began. Prohibition was repudiated in all but one or two States. When a great reform begins, succeeds for a while, and then fails, further progress is doubly difficult. The unclean spirit comes back with seven others more evil than himself, and the last state of the nation becomes worse than the first. That the prohibition

cause should have ultimately won after this initial failure is proof of its inherent justice and truth. Its triumph is also a striking demonstration of the efficacy of the methods used. After the tide of reaction had swept nearly a dozen States back into the liquor-licensing practice, the temperance leaders saw the necessity for a wider and deeper education program for the movement. They turned to the children. Temperance instruction was introduced into the public school curriculum. Books on physiology had a chapter on the circulation which ended with a section telling of the effects of alcohol on the heart, lungs, and blood vessels; another on the nervous system, with a section on the effects of alcohol on the brain, spinal cord, and nerves; and so on to the end of the book. Many public-school teachers taught these temperance lessons with much enthusiasm. The sellers of dissipation, usually wiser for their own generation than the children of light, were caught napping. They understood very well the art of political manipulation, whereby legislatures and courts were induced to do their will; but the instruction of children was a means of propaganda beyond their range of experience. Perhaps they, for a time, thought of the new venture as a harmless diversion for the temperance "cranks." But they soon became alarmed and began vigorous action looking toward the banishing of the temperance instruction from the public schools. They were strong enough to accomplish their designs in many States; but the seeds of their undoing had been scattered in fertile ground. They could not uproot the teachers' sowing. When the boys and girls who had received the temperance instruction in their youth grew to manhood and womanhood, they put the liquor dealers out of business.—Walter Albion Squires, in The Week Day Church School.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS
THE BENEFITS OF TOTAL ABSTINENCE

Beginning the Lesson

Who were the Rechabites? (Explanations and Comments.)

These strange wanderers, plunged into the civilization of a city alien to all their habits, are a notable example of simple-hearted fidelity. They possessed the first essential of good witnesses. They stated simply, without bluster and without apology, where they stood and that they were immovable. Having a definite conviction, they did not attempt to argue. They stated it and left the matter for others to discuss. There was no room for argument in their minds. They were also quite careless concerning what other people thought of them. They were entirely indifferent as to whether many or few or none agreed with them. They had made up their minds as to what was right for themselves, and there the matter ended. Of such stuff martyrs are made.

Men who are faithful to their convictions must sometimes take their stand as the Rechabites did. There may be no opportunity for argument. They may stand for the moment entirely alone. Their attitude may appear to be mere obstinacy. What is supremely important to them may seem merely futile to others. It matters not. The best way to educate conscience is to obey it. Tenacity of conviction is the best fiber of manhood.

The noblest fidelity is, however, a reasoned fidelity. The modern total abstainer from alcohol has a far stronger position than the ancient Rechabites. Many a son is thankful that his father bequeathed to him the practice of total abstinence, but that does not remove the need of arguments to make his position intelligible. Fortunately arguments abound, economic and hygienic, moral and religious. They should be known and stated. But in the end, when a lad has his back against the wall, what makes him victorious is his sheer determination to stand firm at all costs. This is the final explanation of moral and spiritual victory. To have "fidelis" written after one's name, and to have deserved it, is the highest glory of earth, and close to the glory of heaven.—R. C. Gillie, in The Christian.

Hygienic and Spiritual Benefits of Total Abstinence

Man's duty is to cultivate both body and spirit to the best of his ability. And so closely are they interrelated that the care or neglect of the one involves the care or neglect of the other. Every violation of God's law injures both body and soul. It is a matter of every-day experience that temperance brings a reward in vigor of body and clearness of mind. Listen to Milton's temperance lecture, in Paradise Lost:

"If thou wilt observe
The rule of not too much, by temperance taught,

In what thou eat'st and drinkest, seeking thence
Due nourishment, not gluttonous delight,
Till many years over thy head return,
So may'st thou live, till, like ripe fruit thou drop
Into thy mother's lap, or be with ease
Gathered, not harshly plucked, for death mature."

Temperance does lengthen life. Life insurance companies are good authorities on the effect of liquor. The American Temperance Life Insurance Association of New York was organizd to provide insurance for total abstainers. After basing the cost of its policies on the average life of total abstainers, the company later changed its rules and admitted moderate drinkers. At the end of twenty-six years from its organization it failed because the deaths among "moderates" were fifty per cent. more than they were among the total abstainers.

Economic Benefits of Total Abstinence

The officers of the United States League of Building and Loan Associations at their annual convention declared that the great increase in their assets was the result of prohibition.

The Salvation Army asserts that prohibition has necessitated a complete change of the type of work done for women by the army. "The notorious districts in our large centers are fast disappearing. There was a time when in every large city we had a staff of women officers who did nothing else but walk through the streets around the midnight hour and speak with young girls whom they met in questionable surroundings. Now the need is gone and we have abandoned the plan altogether."

Mr. John G. Cooper, Congressman from Ohio and member of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, explains that it is not the men and women who work for a living and are busily engaged in producing the wealth of the nation who are agitating against prohibition. "It is somewhat a mystery to us men engaged in the dangerous business of railroading," he comments, "why any wage earner would want to return to the misery of the evils of the pre-Volstead days. To say that the Eighteenth Amendment has been a total failure, that the drink habit is as bad or worse than before, we know is simply propaganda of those interested in the return of a business that has done more to retard civilization and human progress than any one thing in the world's history. We men in the railroad game know that the Eighteenth Amendment has been the greatest blessing we ever received. We know that we are better off morally, financially, intellectually and in every other way by the outlawing of the booze business."

Abstinence for the Sake of Others

We are members of a society that is not Christian—Christian moral standards prevail there only fragmentarily. As members of that society we are bound to labor for its health and prosperity. We are bound to consider ourselves as social beings with social responsibilities. We are confronted with a set of questions which are to be answered from the point of view, not of individuals but of social morality. In other words, we need to educate not only an individual but a social conscience. Christians today, speaking broadly, have not a developed social conscience. They still, from the point of view of a crass individualism (an individualism which it is one of the chief ends of Christianity to destroy), ask, "Is this act in itself sin?" and not, "Is this act, considered as the act of a social being,

A Poster Visualizing the British Drink Bill

injurious to the society of which I am a member? Is it injurious to the brother whom I am bound to protect?"

The Christian question, therefore, in the matter of the use of intoxicants, is not, "Do they injure me? Can I use them without abusing them?" but, "Is their use under modern conditions socially harmful? Have conditions arisen in modern life which can only be adequately dealt with by total abstinence?" Can there be any doubt of the answer?

It will, of course, be said that in fact there is such doubt, that in fact Christian opinion on the matter of prohibition is widely divided, that many earnest Christians are opposed to the present legislation. That is sadly true; and it is an indication of the prevalence of individualism and of the failure to think socially or in terms of Christian brotherhood.

What are the effects of indulgence in drink? Poverty is one of the outstanding ones. In forty years' experience in the priesthood I have never met a case of "down and out" poverty that had not an alcoholic element. Do we want to reduce the poverty of the country?

Another result of alcoholic indulgence is disease. Habitual alcoholics are poor risks from the insurance point of view. But it is not only "drunks" who suffer from disease, but many who would be classed as moderate drinkers. Why does not the medical profession speak out?

With disease can be classed degeneracy of offspring. Notoriously crime is closely connected with alcoholism. The connection is so intimate that it is often difficult to tell which is the original factor; but it seems clear that the criminal youth begins at the alcoholic end.

Unhappiness in the family life and often its utter breakdown can many times be traced to alcohol. When one considers what women have suffered through the alcoholism of their husbands and children it is incredible that any woman should favor the traffic in drink.—Condensed from an article in The American Church Monthly, by J. H. G. Barry.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. How popular opinion favorable to the liquor interests is aroused. "There is the propaganda carried on through the daily press. Insidious articles detailing the easy violation of the Prohibition Law, stories of officials' indifference, slurring insinuations against dry leaders, items that set prohibition in a ridiculous light and create a spirit of tolerance for the bootlegger, whether he is one of the social four hundred or a former saloon porter." Comic pictures. Movies.

2. A task for the class. Let each Bible Class have a law enforcement committee that will actively aid the police forces. In one city, traffic-law violations dropped fifty per cent when, after an educational campaign, cards were supplied every private citizen upon which he was urged to report to the police department any violation he observed. The same method may be followed and the Bible Class supplied with a form of report giving data to the police to investigate.

Institute an active campaign of counter-propaganda. Supply the press with material showing the prohibition viewpoint, stories of successful prosecution of violators, news of rallies and mass meetings in the interests of law enforcement, reports of addresses showing an awakened conscience on this subject.

Conferences between Bible Class members and local law-enforcement officers—the chief of police, the prosecuting attorney, the local and State Federal officers, together with representatives of the Anti-Saloon League and various church organizations that deal with matters of public welfare, will produce remarkable results.

With prohibition written into our Constitution and upon our statute books there are those who still consider it a debatable question. We must speak positively of prohibition as a fact, and support words with deeds. And to no body of Christian men and women does the challenge to do this come so forcefully as to the adult Bible Class in America.—Edward R. Bartlett.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Read the parallel accounts in Jer. 28.28 to 39.14; 52.1-30; 2 Ch. 36.11-21. 2. Read the Book of Lamentations. 3. What did the destruction of the temple mean to the people? 4. What parallels in the Great War to the scenes connected with the fall of Jerusalem? 5. What causes led to the captivity of Judah? 6. What were the sins of the nation of Judah? 8. What warnings had they had? 9. Does retribution always follow wrong?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS
ACCEPTING A HIGH MORAL STANDARD

Beginning the Lesson

One day while the enemy was coming down like a flood through the land, a very remarkable party of gypsy-like people came hurrying into Jerusalem for safety.

During nearly three hundred years this wandering tribe had never been inside a town, and nothing but sheer terror of the Fierce Foe had driven them in now. The reason why the Rechabites lived in tents away from cities and the ordinary doings of men, takes us back to the time of Jehu, when there lived a good man named Jonadab. Now when Jonadab saw all the wickedness in the cities, the drunkenness and the idolatry, and the little children learning bad ways, he thought how much better it would be for his family to live always away from towns and adopt the fashion of "the simple life."

He told them to build no house, to sow no seed, to grow no grapes, to drink no wine, to do with as little as possible, and to bring up their children in the same Spartan manner.

So did the family of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, and their sons followed in his footsteps unto the third and fourth generation and after, right up to the day when the Fierce Foe drove them for shelter inside the walls of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah himself went to their encampment; he went because God had told him to go, and invite them all to a feast. The feast was to be held in one of the rooms over the gate inside the Temple Court. And all the Rechabites accepted the invitation gladly.

Quite a long procession of them started off with Jeremiah, and crowds collected all along the way. The mad prophet, with a tribe of gypsies at his heels, was not a sight to miss, even though Nebuchadnezzar was causing great anxiety in high quarters. The crowd followed eagerly, full of interest and speculation, as the gypsies passed inside the gate and up the stairs into the chamber, where the feast was prepared.

And what a feast it was! Just such a feast as the soul of Jerusalem would have loved. A cup was placed by every seat, and the table was laden with brimming pots full of wine.

"Drink," said their host, when all were assembled. You could have heard a pin drop in the silence that followed. Jeremiah's suspense was almost unbearable. Supposing, after all, these men "did do as Jerusalem did"! They were but human, and the temptation was great.

The Rechabites looked at the table, they looked at each other, they looked at Jeremiah, and then they said firmly with one accord—

"No, we will drink no wine. Our father told us not to; and we always have, and always will, obey him."

The crowd outside had not long to wait for their curiosity to be rewarded. Jeremiah appeared with a quiet, triumphant face, and preached them a sermon on obedience. "These Rechabites," he said, "have been sorely tempted to disobey their earthly father's commandment. The table in here is loaded with wine, and I, a servant of God, have offered it to them, and yet they have resisted and kept true to their principles. Oh, how different are these people to you. You to whom your Heavenly Father has sent message after message to tell you of his love, and the blessings that he will send if you obey him; but you never listen to his voice. Will ye not learn wisdom even now?"

The crowd had not come to be preached to, and began to melt away, when they found the tables turned upon themselves. Muttering their usual answer, "We will not hearken," they slunk back to their own homes.—Lettice Bell, in The Boiling Cauldron.

The Coming Man

Strong of body, strong of soul,
Firm of purpose to control,
He will spurn the tempting bowl,
In the shadow of the vine.
No taint of wine in his full brain,
No trembling hand will hold the rein,
When he who rules shall drink no wine.—George Bungay.

The Attitude of Two Famous Americans toward Alcoholic Drink

The two Americans upon whom the admiration of Europe centers today are young Colonel Lindbergh and Big Bill Tilden. Both are examples of sobriety. Lindbergh called for milk when he landed after his perilous trip. He tells the press that he does not drink alcoholic liquor. The perfect machine of his brain has never been slowed down or marred by the poison of alcohol. Big Bill Tilden, the tennis champion, has popularized what Paris now calls the Tilden cocktail, consisting of a large bottle of mineral water. "The Tilden cocktail and nothing stronger" is his advice to aspiring young players. Here are two sermons on sobriety; two shining examples for the youth of the world to follow—Lindbergh and Tilden, products of Dry America, which is striving to reach the goal of national sobriety by means of that policy enacted into law which Ramsay MacDonald calls "the great effort to keep people decent."—Arthur J. Davis.

Straight Traffic

"Father," said Ernest, as he rode downtown in New Haven beside Dr. Benton in the automobile, "why are you always laying so much emphasis upon habits? I think you're asking me to take a pretty long look ahead. Shouldn't a fellow have a few years in which he can be carefree? It doesn't seem to me that a young fellow should take life as seriously as you are trying to make me take it. I want to have my four years in college carefree, without everlastingly thinking of consequences. If I need to, I can turn over a new leaf when I get through college."

As Ernest finished his protest they passed a traffic signpost that read, "Straight Traffic at the Next Corner."

"What does that sign mean?" asked the doctor, for he was from out of town and had not seen it before.

"It means," said his son, "that now you've passed that post you have to go straight ahead. You can't stop, and you can't turn."

"Well, I guess," said the doctor, as his machine shot out of the traffic into the open street ahead, "that's as good an illustration as I need. Ernest, I've been practicing medicine long enough to have seen a good many sides of life, and the more I see of it the more I'm convinced that it's pretty much like that traffic post—once you get beyond a certain point with some things there's no stopping. You simply have to go right through. The drink habit or the drug habit is an example. I don't suppose anyone who started out with a friendly glass now and then thought he was going to end with delirium tremens. But before he knew it, he ran by the last point of recovery, just as I ran by that signpost, and after that it was 'straight traffic at the next corner' for him.

"It reminds me of one time when I took the wrong train at New York. I wanted to get off at Norwalk, but I'd got on a through express to New Haven, and to New Haven I went. First you take the train; then the train takes you. The time to do your thinking about your destination is before you take the train. You say you don't want to be everlastingly thinking of consequences while you're in college. Well, it's because I don't want you to have to think everlastingly about consequences after you get out of college that I am warning you to be careful now. The turning over a new leaf idea is a snare laid by the devil. What you've written by habit in your nervous system is written and it's always there either as an ally or as an enemy. Don't run past the signposts, and then expect nature to reverse the traffic regulations for your benefit. Beyond a certain point it's 'straight traffic at the next corner' for us all."—The Youth's Companion.

Sentence Sermons

Whatever people may think of you, do that which you think to be right.—Pythagoras.

If the youth changes his residence or surroundings, let him know that principles vary not with place or society.—Andrew P. Peabody.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Why did the Babylonians burn the temple? 2. Where was Riblah? 3. Babylon? 4. What was the fate of Jeremiah? (Jer. 39.40.) 5. What reason is given in Lam. 1.8 for the fall of Jerusalem? 6. What were some of the sins of the nation that Isaiah and Jeremiah denounced?

JUDAH TAKEN CAPTIVE

GOLDEN TEXT: Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people. Proverbs 14.34

LESSON 2 Kings 25.1-21 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 107.10-16

2 KINGS 25.1 And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and encamped against it; and they built forts against it round about. 2 So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 3 On the ninth day of the *fourth* month the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. 4 Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war *fled* by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden (now the Chaldeans were against the city round about); and *the king* went by the way of the Arabah. 5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him. 6 Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. 7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

8 Now in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem. 9 And he burnt the house of Jehovah, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house, burnt he with fire. 10 And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were *with* the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about. 11 And the residue of the people that were left in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the residue of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away captive. 12 But the captain of the guard left of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM, verses 1-3. In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, 586 B.C., in the tenth month according to the Babylonian calendar, which numbered its months from the spring season, the tenth month corresponding to our January, and on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, came with his army and besieged Jerusalem. "The nation never forgot the month and the day on which the armies of Chaldea finally invested the city. It was felt as the day of the deepest gloom by the Israelite exiles, Ezek. 24. It has been commemorated as a fast, the Fast of Tebeth, ever since in the Jewish Church" (Dean Stanley).

Nebuchadnezzar's army encamped around the city and built forts against it. The forts were probably movable towers from which missiles could be discharged over the city walls. Jerusalem held out for eighten months. From Jeremiah 3.4, 7 we learn that a part of Nebuchadnezzar's troops were engaged in attacking Lachish and Azekah during this time, and from Jeremiah 37.5, 11 that the reported approach of an army from Egypt caused a brief raising of the siege. The siege was resumed, and at last famine became so acute in the city that there was no bread for the people. Read the account in Jeremiah 21.7-9; Lamentations 4.8-10; 5.10.

II. THE FLIGHT FROM JERUSALEM AND THE FATE OF ZEDEKIAH, verses 4-7. Then a breach was made in the city walls, and the Israelites fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden. "This gate was on the south of the city, probably the 'fountain gate' of Nehemiah, the two walls being those below this gate along the west side of the east hill of Jerusalem, and the east side of the west hill" (S. R. Driver). They must have known that there was little chance of making good their escape, for the Chaldeans surrounded the city.

The king fled by the way of the Arabah, a name given to the whole deep valley of the Jordan from the Sea of Galilee southward to the desert beyond the Dead Sea. He hoped to escape across the ford at Jericho and find safety in the mountainous region on the east of the Jordan, but the enemy pursued and captured him on the plains of Jericho. They carried him to Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar was awaiting news of the victory. There the men appointed to pass sentence upon him decreed that he should be bound in fetters hand and foot, and taken to Babylon. But first they slew his sons before him (and all the nobles of Judah, the royal

family and the influential men, that there might be no revolt, Jer. 39.6), and then they put out his eyes. Upon reaching Babylon, Zedekiah was kept a prisoner until he died, Jer. 52.11.

III. THE FATE OF JERUSALEM, verses 8-10, 13-17. On the seventh day of the fifth month, Nebuzaradan, the captain of Nebuchadnezzar's guard (literally, "chief of the executioners," the king's bodyguard to whom such duties belonged), came to complete the destruction of Jerusalem. The work of devastation was thoroughly done. The gold and silver vessels, and the pillars and vessels of brass of the temple were saved to be carried to Babylon, and then the sacred temple, on which such a passion of love had been lavished, was razed to the ground. The king's palace and every great house in the city were burned, and the city walls were broken down.

IV. THE FATE OF THE PEOPLE, verses 11, 12, 22. The remnant of the people that had been left in the city, the better citizens who had remained faithful to their country, and those that had deserted to the Babylonians, and the multitude, the useful workers, were carried away captive to Babylon. The poorest of the people were left to cultivate the land, as vine dressers and husbandmen. Gedaliah, the son of Jeremiah's friend Ahikam, was made governor of the cities of Judah with headquarters at Mizpah.

V. THE FATE OF JEREMIAH, Jer. 40. In the confusion of the capture of Jerusalem, Jeremiah was taken bound as far as Ramah, but Nebuchadnezzar bade Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, permit him to choose whether he would go to Babylon in honor, or return to Judah. He chose to return. "How Jeremiah would pass mournfully amid the blackened ruins!" comments F. B. Meyer. "There was the palace of David; and there was the place where he had so often stood to warn his people of their sins. What all this meant to Jeremiah words fail to say. No truer heart ever beat in patriot's bosom. What Phocion felt for Athens, what Savonarola for Florence, what the elder Pitt for England, amid the catastrophes that darkened his later days—that in a concentrated form must Jeremiah have felt and suffered. Anticipating the words of One who in after days was to sit on the same mount and look across the valley, he might have said: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!' "

When Gedaliah, the governor, was treacherously slain by a prince of the house of David, the survivors, fearing the vengeance of the Babylonians, fled to Egypt and forced Jeremiah to go with them. Tradition says that in Egypt he was martyred by his countrymen.

"So when a great man dies
For years beyond our ken,
The light he leaves behind him lies
Upon the path of men" (Longfellow).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

They built forts against it round about, verse 1. The city wall was high and strong, and it was useless to attempt to undermine it. It must be attacked not far from the summit. It was from the earthworks erected for this purpose (Jer. 32.24) that the battering-rams and storming-towers were brought to play upon the wall. Hence enormous labor was necessary before a suitable base of operations could be secured upon the sloping approaches to the city. When aggressive action was fairly begun, unless the besieged were numerous and skilful enough to disable the besiegers by arrows or other deadly weapons, only the very strongest walls could long endure the constant battering, followed by the pickaxes, crowbars, and wall-hooks by which the stones were dislocated and removed. Moreover, a force of defenders, weakened or diminished by famine, could not long withstand a constant shower of missiles from the siege towers.—McCurdy.

They put out the eyes of Zedekiah, verse 7. The blinding of prisoners was a common practice among the Babylonians, Assyrians and Persians. Once it was the custom for the Sultan of Turkey on ascending the throne to slay or blind all his half-brothers. There is a marble slab, found at Khorsabad, which represents Sargon

of Assyria holding a prisoner by a thong attached to a ring inserted in his underlip and thrusting a spear into his eye.

And bound him in fetters, verse 7. An inscription of Nebuchadnezzar's reads: "To far off lands, distant hills, from the upper sea to the lower sea, immense journeys, . . . I pursued, and the disobedient I reduced, the rebellious I fettered." There is in the British Museum a pair of bronze fetters weighing nearly nine pounds which were found at Nineveh and probably resembled those with which Zedekiah was bound.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Fall of Jerusalem

Jerusalem was taken and the Kingdom of Judah came to an end in 586 B.C. "July 9, B.C. 586. Some dates are written in fire on the pages of history. This is one so written. It is made to stand out vividly in detail. 'The eleventh year of Zedekiah, the fourth month, the ninth day of the month.' On that day the long-delayed judgment of God was executed. Jerusalem fell. The clock of Israel's history stopped, not to start again for fifty years. It was stopped by the finger of God, and the halted hands point silently and grimly to the hour when the crisis fell. Zedekiah was the twenty-third ruler since the Hebrew kingdom began with the crowning of Saul; he was the twentieth ruler over Judah after the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam, B.C. 932; he was the eighth king after the fall of Samaria in B.C. 722. It was the termination of a period of five hundred and thirty-four years" (John T. McFarland).

Nebuchadnezzar, the Giant of Babylon

Nebuchadnezzar was the master mind of his generation. No man in his dominions had his reach and grasp in statecraft or in strategy. When we think of Nebuchadnezzar we must class him with Napoleon, or Peter the Great, or Charlemagne, or with the man to whom he was most akin, Alexander of Macedon.

He was great in war. In his early years, while his father, Nabopolassar, was king in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar was the prince and darling of the vast Chaldean armies, and shared in the subjugation of Nineveh, the rival empire. He tamed the Bedouins of Arabia from the Red Sea to the uplands of Asia Minor. He took Tyre, which thought itself impregnable in its island keep, after a thirteen years' siege. He crumpled up the power of Egypt. He sat down before Jerusalem, angered by its proud rebelliousness, and after eighteen months of waiting sacked the city, and carried off the flower of its people as captives. "Thou, O King," said Daniel, "art king of kings, unto whom the God of heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory."

He was even greater as a statesman and administrator. In the East to this day the fame of Nebuchadnezzar rests, not upon his soldierly exploits, but upon his achieve-

Jewish Captives

ments in the arts of peace. In his public works he displayed a genius which shows his massive mind and his cultured taste. In walls and waterworks, in parks and gardens, in temples and palaces, he proved himself to be one of the master-builders of all time. It may be questioned if the world will ever again see such a city as this far-spreading garden-city of Babylon. Its citizens delighted in a costly refinement and ease. They reveled in luxury. In vessels of gold and silver, in soft carpets and dainty curtains—a manufacture which persists to this day—and, in instruments of

music, its workmen held as high a place in art as its sages kept in the wisdom of their time. We need not wonder that as Nebuchadnezzar walked on the roof of his palace, and looked out over the city he had built, his heart was lifted up, and he needed to be taught that "those who walk in pride God is able to abase."—W. M. Clow.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

From Jerusalem to Riblah

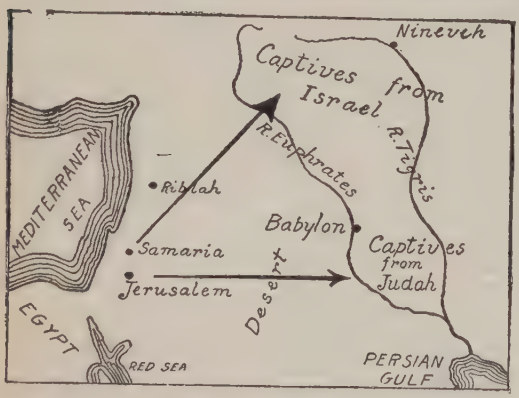
Zedekiah and his warriors escaped through the southern gates and fled down the Kidron Valley to the Valley of the Jordan (the Arabah), but were captured on the plains of Jericho. Then he was taken prisoner two hundred miles northward to Riblah on the upper Orontes, about one hundred miles north of Dan, where Nebuchadnezzar was stationed. There his sons and the princes were slain and he was blinded, and then he was taken in fetters to Babylon.

The Route to Babylon

A month later (Jer. 52.4) the greater part of the population of Judah was exported to Babylon. They did not go directly east across the desert, but northward to Damascus, then across to the Euphrates, and southeastward to Babylonia.

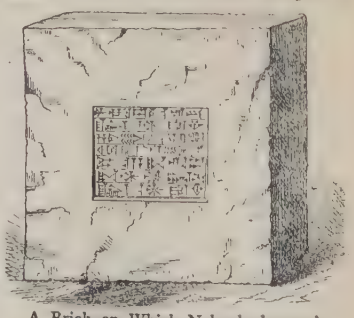
Assyria, Babylonia, Chaldea

Keep in mind that while Assyria, Babylonia, and Chaldea lay in the region watered by the Tigris and the Euphrates, Assyria proper was on the north on both sides of the Tigris; Babylonia proper was south of Assyria between the Tigris and the Euphrates; and Chaldea proper was on the Persian Gulf southeast of Babylonia. At the time of the capture of Jerusalem the names of Babylonia and Chaldea both referred to the New Babylonian Kingdom founded by Nebuchadnezzar's father Nabopolassar.



Babylon

Babylon was at this time a very ancient city. We know that its huge walls were three hundred feet high, that its "Hanging Gardens" were one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, and that the huge temple of Bel was grander than any of the other ancient temples. Its site has long been covered over to a depth of fifty feet in places by the soil thrown upon it by the floods from the Euphrates River. Archæologists have dug through to the foundations of the ancient city. The very temple of Nebuchadnezzar has been unearthed, and men living in the twentieth century after Christ can walk over the pavement on which he walked seven centuries before Christ. Each brick in Nebuchadnezzar's palace is stamped with his name and royal titles in cunieform script. The throne hall is an immense room, and the intricacy of the passages, rooms, and courts is said to be bewildering.



A Brick on Which Nebuchadnezzar's Name Is Stamped

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

We have had many lessons dealing with individual sin and punishment, and our pupils have been led to apply the lessons personally. We have also had lessons dealing with duties and sins within a group, and our pupils have realized that there are coöperative responsibilities. This lesson affords older pupils an opportunity for thinking in terms of world relations, for realizing that God judges not only "all important me" and my group, but all the world, made up of many nations.

It was Zedekiah the king as representing the nation who thought his treaty with another nation was only a scrap of paper, but it was the entire nation that suffered. The teaching of the lesson should leave in all minds a feeling of responsibility for national virtue. And by national virtue we mean not only the virtue common among citizens, but the righteous conduct of our nation in its international relation—individual responsibility for mass conduct.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

Beginning the Lesson

In the year 66 A.D., the Jews revolted against the Roman rule, and this led to the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans under Titus in 70 A.D., and to the end of the Jewish nation. Throughout all the centuries since, the Jews have kept the Fast of Ab on the ninth of that month (August) as a day of mourning. A recent editorial in the Jewish Chronicle expresses the feeling of the Jews at the present day:

"We know how, since we were despoiled of our position among the nations of the world, there has been no peace for Israel, however fortune may now and again have smiled on individual sections of the race. It is the undoing of that wrong for which all Israel looks faithfully and hopefully, and for which some are working as well as praying. A people who observe year after year the anniversary of the downfall of the State and the destruction of the temple (Herod's), which was its greatest glory, offers a suggestive opportunity for study to the psychologist. The day's celebrations consist chiefly of dirge and lamentation and the customs common to occasions of mourning and of sorrow. Mourning with Zion's downfall, nay, even sharing in its shame, we may make ourselves worthy of its ultimate triumph, knowing that this can only be achieved as an outcome of its return to righteousness.

"The suggestion comes that the Fast is now out of keeping with the new orientation of the Jewish people; that the 'weeping wall' is an anachronism in the presence of the new foundations rising in the Land of Israel. Our fathers of old in the buildings that they raised in the lands of the dispersion left always a corner bare—without ornament and unbeautified—in memory of the destruction of the temple. The gladdest of the celebrations had its allusions to the unceasing mourning for Zion by the people. And even the partial lifting of the mists that hide our people's future must leave us mindful of its chequered and still darkling history."

As we hear these words, written after the destruction of Herod's temple, we realize something of what Jerusalem with its temple has meant to the Jews throughout their history. We have come in our study of the history of the Kingdom of Judah to the capture of Jerusalem, the destruction of Solomon's temple, and the captivity of the Judeans.

The Great Calamity

The Septuagint Version of the Book of Lamentations begins with these words: "And it came to pass, after Israel had been carried into captivity and Jerusalem had been laid waste, that Jeremiah sat weeping and lamenting with this lamentation over Jerusalem." Near the Damascus Gate on the north of Jerusalem there is a cave called Jeremiah's Grotto, which tradition says is the very spot where the prophet sat while writing Lamentations. Although the Hebrew version is anonymous, it is generally believed that the book is the work of Jeremiah. The book is read by pious Jews every Friday afternoon at the Jews' Wailing Place in the city of Jerusalem, and on the ninth of August, the anniversary of the day on which Herod's temple was burned, it is read in Jewish synagogues the world over.

For many lessons we have seen the destruction of Jerusalem slowly but surely approaching. Now we see its advent. The record is told dispassionately; it should be supplemented by the Book of Lamentations with its account of the horrors of the siege, and the pathos of the capture and destruction of the city, with its confession of sin, its acknowledgment that the punishment was of God for the sins of the nation, with its assurance that God pitied where he punished, and with its faith that in his mercy God would "renew their days as of old."

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is brought upon me, wherewith Jehovah hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Thus the author of Lamentations expresses the intensity of his grief over the calamity which we today see befall his people.

The Cause of the Captivity

A modern historian might say that Jerusalem was captured because Hezekiah and his army were no match for the great Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans, and because the last kings of Judah had followed a very unwise policy in trying to escape the Assyrian and then the Babylonian yoke by relying on help from Egypt. All this was true, but while these may seem the primary reasons for the captivity, they are in fact only secondary. Back of the political causes were the moral causes. Judah had grievously sinned (Lam. 1.8), had become thoroughly corrupt, idolatry with all the evils in its train had spread with rapid pace during the last years of the kingdom, and only the severest measures could discipline her. The punishment of exile was sent by God, who employed Nebuchadnezzar as his servant (Jer. 25.9; 27.6) in working his will. Jehovah hath afflicted Jerusalem for the multitude of her transgressions (Lam. 1.5).

It was not from lack of warning that Judah went to her doom. Take the Book of Jeremiah and cast your eyes along the running lines at the top of the page which give the leading topics of Jeremiah's message. This is what you will see: The people's former love and present apostasy; Their backsliding unexampled; The people's self-confidence vain; Jehovah's forbearance with their infidelity; Judah's conduct worse than Israel's; Judah threatened with invasion; A lament over Judah's devastation; Jerusalem's godlessness denounced; Her impending overthrow; A picture of Judah's guilt; Threatened siege of Jerusalem; Her ruinous fall to come because of her covetousness and obstinacy; Destruction to come from the North; Temple worship of no avail to the ungodly; Their idolatry denounced; Treachery and shamelessness of Judah, the avenger near; A lament over the desperate state of Zion; Ruin and exile threatened. I have repeated the references to the first nine chapters only, and there are forty-three more chapters in the book.

The ax which was carried before a Roman Consul was bound up in a bundle of rods to show that the extreme penalty was never inflicted until milder means had failed. Milder means had been tried with the Chosen People of God: the prophets had constantly warned them, many of the people had been carried away captive, and the treasures of the temple had been taken. Very patient and long-suffering had God been with them till, even as a physician counsels an operation as "a last resort," he used the drastic remedy of captivity to work their ultimate cure. In the words of Lamentations,

> The Lord will not cast off forever:
> For though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.
> For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

We shall see in our next Quarter's lessons that the remedy proved efficacious. In Babylon the Jews gave up their gross idolatry, and the faithful remnant that eventually returned were loyal to Jehovah their God.

Woe unto Nations that Have Sinned

Ages ago Egypt was the cradle of the Arts, the mother of learning. She had her chariots of iron, her cities with their hundred gates. She reared her pyramids to stand for ages, monuments of her power and of her tyranny. She built her massive prisons and forged instruments of torture to girdle the limbs of men. She brought home her captives and overawed her enemies by mere terror of her name; but nothing could she do to elevate her moral life and save her people from decay. Her teeming millions, though victors in war, were themselves vanquished by a stronger power. The God of Nations had been disregarded; his principles set at naught; and his punishment must follow.

Greece followed, so refined, so cultivated, so polished, that the homes of her people were not unworthy of the gods they worshiped; her sculptors and philosophers were their fit companions. If ever culture or refinement could perpetuate a nation and preserve it from decay, then Greece had never fallen. But at the very time when her orators and philosophers were crowning themselves with a wreath of immortal honor, her people had sunk into such sensual and degrading practices as would pollute the lips that named them. At the very time when the ruined temples were standing in their proud magnificence, the cry of her seers was rising to the gods who could not help them. "The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us that we have sinned!"

Rome followed with her foot of iron with which she crushed the nations. Her

soldiers crossed the Alps and Pyrenees and changed the destinies of Europe. They carried the sword into Africa until the sands of the Sahara alone barred their way. They disturbed the peace of the East, and, anon, planted their standard in Britain, claiming for themselves a universal Empire. Rome did much for the world. She civilized the countries she crushed; she constructed roads upon her blood-stained track; she flung bridges across rivers she forded; she made laws; beneficent for herself—a rich legacy for us. But she could not heal the wound which was shortening her days. The highest precept she could give to her deluded people was simply this: "Live every day as if the eye of Cato were upon you." What a piteous antidote for the ravening disease of moral misery! It needed no seer to foretell the fate of such a nation.

And side by side with these great nations—Egypt, Greece, and Rome—the Hebrew people were writing their history in the words of blood. Abraham pitched his tent in Mesopotamia at the time when Egypt was in the glory of her youth. Titus stormed the city of Jerusalem and humbled her pride when Rome had reached her highest pinnacle of power. In that great interval the history of Israel was like an oft-repeated tale—coming to God—wandering away again; prostrating themselves before Jehovah with tears and supplication, in sackcloth and ashes, and anon debasing themselves with incestuous idolatry and rebellious sedition. One year they were sitting peaceable and quiet at their judge's feet, another year found them crying for deliverance from the trouble into which their sin had brought them. Chastened by Philistines and Edomites, enemies without; weakened by sedition within; they were at last subjugated by a mightier power and scattered to every corner of the earth, where they wearied heaven with repeated lamentation.

And now we turn to our nation and ask what will be the record of her fate. Is it to be ever thus? Is every nation to decay and fall after living a few short centuries? Is every citizen to believe that his country's banner will one day be trailing in the dust? Is every man to be haunted by the consciousness that he is not what he might have been? Is every stranger to prowl among the ruins of his former greatness and exclaim: "The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us that we have sinned!"

Why has it ever been thus? Is it not because the God of Nations has been disregarded? Because men have been blind enough to beat the music out in tune with their own ideas? Because they have deified the Ego and dethroned the Almighty? Priding themselves upon their achievements they have mounted their walls and cried with that Eastern arrogant king, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" Nations have decayed, not for lack of power, but for lack of piety. Failure has swooped upon us because we would not give to God the glory of success. Even when their walls were tottering many a people would have preserved their name had they the humility to acknowledge to the Supreme Sovereign: "The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us that we have sinned!"

Thus we hear a note of hope ringing through this wail of woe. To a proud people it is a cry of despair. To a pious people it is a pæan of victory. We stand among the ruins of the past and see how short we have fallen of the glory of God. Failure besets us on every hand. Past achievements are marred with imperfections. Present duties are blighted by our incompetence. Future prospects are clouded by shadows from the past. We lift our heart to heaven and cry with all humility: "The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us that we have sinned!" But the winds of heaven which waft our prayer to God bear back to us the message of hope: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name. Thou art mine."—Condensed from a Sermon by J. Frederic Sanders.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The Book of Lamentations. An account of the events and religious meaning of the Fall of Jerusalem and the Captivity.

2. Buffer states. Judah was "a little nation" between the great nations of Egypt and Chaldea. The little buffer state about half as large as Massachusetts (Belgium) which stood for a Great Idea. The buffer states of the present, among them Tibet. The phenomenal security of Switzerland in the Great War.

3. Deportations. Are they justifiable? The story of Evangeline. The deportation of the Belgians. The deportation of the Armenians. Our own deportations.

4. The law of retribution. "As for repealing the law of retribution, we might as well undertake to repeal the law of gravitation."

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is the meaning of the first verse? 2. How does God heal all our diseases? 3. With verse 9 compare Is. 57.16. 4. To what verse in Genesis is verse 14 an allusion? 5. With verse 15 compare Job 7.10. 6. What special reasons for thanksgiving has our nation? 7. Are you becoming more happy, or more discontented? More grateful, or more thankless? 8. How do you express your gratitude to God?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

PAYING THE PRICE OF SINNING

Beginning the Lesson

Among the treasures in the British Museum there is part of the head of a goddess carved in marble. This broken fragment was picked up in a temple in Greece, not far from Marathon, where the famous races were held. This goddess was named Nemesis. She was said to be the daughter of the god of night, and the old Greeks and the Romans, too, were much afraid of her. She was the goddess of vengeance, and was supposed to pursue those people who had done wrong until they had been thoroughly punished for their wrongdoing. You see the Greeks and the Romans had both found out that punishment of some kind always follows sin, and they put all the trouble down to this goddess, Nemesis.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," declared Paul. The people of Judah had sinned over and over again. They had neglected the worship of God, and had worshiped idols. And instead of living a good life and keeping God's commandments, they had been wicked in every way. All sin brings punishment. The people would not listen to God's warning, and so at last he let the punishment fall upon them. Through whom did it come?—Condensed from an article in The Sunday School Chronicle, by Grace Winter.

The Fate of a Nation that Disobeyed God

The siege of Jerusalem wore on, with misery indescribable. Little children, too young to understand, implored their parents to give them bread. They cried to their mothers, "Where is corn and wine?" But their mothers could not help them, and the children died in the streets.

Every place was full of dead and dying, the young and the old lying together on the ground, while those who died of hunger envied the shorter sufferings of those who died by the sword, for the famine was sore in the city.

For eighteen months Zedekiah held out. Then on the tenth day of the tenth month, at dead of night, the dreaded foe entered Jerusalem.

Before the conquering army could reach the palace, Zedekiah and his soldiers crept out in the darkness, through the palace garden, into a secret passage (doubtless he had prepared it for such an emergency) which led down to the city wall. So far their escape was easy. The danger began at the end of the passage. Trusting to the darkness, or to the carelessness of the sentries, the fugitives made a dash for the gate.

Zedekiah, like most feeble minds, could screw his courage up to foolhardy exploits; besides, he knew this was his only chance, which accounts for his unwonted decision. But alas for his hopes! The foe was on the alert. The runaways were seen, the signal was given. In a short time an army was pursuing the hapless king.

Out in the plains of Jericho, forsaken by his soldiers, Zedekiah was overtaken, and marched like an ordinary prisoner, with his sons, to Nebuchadnezzar's camp in Riblah. On that dreadful journey Zedekiah wished he had listened to Jeremiah's advice. All the stories he had heard of Babylonian cruelty surged through his mind, as each step brought him nearer to his fate.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of fierce countenance, sat in judgment on the prisoners of war. His face was fierce indeed that day, for Zedekiah's rebellion and persistence had cost him greatly. The unfortunate king shrank before that cruel eye. He never had been one to look a man straight in the face.

"Look up!" cried Nebuchadnezzar.

Zedekiah looked up, and saw the most terrible sight he had ever seen. His ears heard the saddest cry they had ever heard. It was the dying cry of his own sons, put to death before his eyes. And all the remainder of his life that cry rang in his ears, and that cruel sight haunted his brain. It was the last thing he ever

saw on earth, for as he covered his face with his hands he, too, was seized and thrown to the ground, and by Nebuchadnezzar's orders his eyes were put out.

The rest of his story is this: his hands were bound in chains, he was marched to Babylon, and there he was left in prison with his blindness and regrets until the day of his death. So he came to Babylon as God had said, though he never did see it with his eyes.—Condensed from The Boiling Cauldron, by Lettice Bell.

Retribution, though long Delayed, Is Sure

A boy of sixteen was working on a plantation in Arkansas. One day he was plowing with a mule and a cow, but the mule was often balky and gave his driver much trouble. After making many unsuccessful attempts to make the mule work, "Jim," as he was then called, took a rope and making a slip-knot in one end, placed it round the lower jaw of the mule, and tied the other end of the rope to the fetlock of that hind leg which was doing the kicking. Then he went back to the plow-handle and gave the usual signal for the team to start. The mule immediately began to kick, but found that every motion of the hind leg pulled painfully upon the lower jaw and the kicking stopped. Then Jim took off the rope, returned to the plow handles, and repeated his command to go ahead. The team started at once, and plowed straight onward without any more kicking from the mule.

Would that every act of disobedience could bring at once upon each human being its fitting retribution! Because evil is not punished at once, many seem to believe that it never will be. Our lesson illustrates the truth that though "God's patience stretches from generation to generation, and his judgments tarry because he is not willing that any should perish, yet for all the long-suffering there comes a time when even Divine love sees that it is needful to say 'now,' and the bolt falls."

A Lesson from a Sponge

A sponge had floated out with the undertow, feeling for a footing, and had at last drifted upon a young conch. Its gelatinous feelers had fastened on the cusp and had clung there, a naturalist explains. Thus anchored, the sponge grew and grew, careless of the discomfort that it caused the conch. Finally the conch, seeking to free itself of its burden, dug deep in the mud. Nature teaches these mollusks to clean their shell in this way. This exactly suited the sponge, for once rooted in the mud with such a burden on its back the conch could rise no more, and so, buried alive in the grave which it had dug for itself, it perished miserably. So sin fastens itself upon a young life, merely causing discomfort at first, but when permitted to stay and grow, it eventually drags that life down to a miserable death.

Do you think that you can sin and it will not matter if you repent and are forgiven? It will matter, both to yourself and to others. Repentance cannot undo the evil that has been wrought. It cannot do the good that has not been wrought; it cannot bring back the wasted days that they may be lived over and filled with righteous deeds.

Sentence Sermons

He that being oft reproved hardeneth his neck,
Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.—Proverbs.

That is the bitterest of all, to wear the yoke of our wrongdoing.—George Eliot.

"The wages of sin are always paid: if there is any delay in settlement, compound interest is added."

Lo! As bird seed shoots after rainless years,
So good and evil, pains and pleasures, hates
And loves, and all dead deeds, come forth again,
Bearing bright leaves or dark, sweet fruit or sour.—Edwin Arnold.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Do you think of thanksgiving as a Christian duty? 2. What subjects for thanksgiving does our Psalm mention? 3. How many times is the word *all* used in this Psalm, and what does it indicate? 4. Mention some of our blessings which we are liable to forget. 5. Are you sometimes guilty of the sin of ingratitude to others? 6. To God? Is it sometimes because you forget all his benefits? 7. Read Whittier's poem entitled The Eternal Goodness, and copy the stanzas you like best. 8. Commit to memory this Psalm.

LESSON XII—JUNE 23

PSALM OF PRAISE

GOLDEN TEXT: Bless Jehovah, O my soul. Psalm 103.1

LESSON Psalm 103.1-22 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 107.23-31

PSALM 103.1 Bless Jehovah, O my soul;
And all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.
2 Bless Jehovah, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;
5 Who satisfieth thy desire with good things,
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.
6 Jehovah executeth righteous acts,
And judgments for all that are oppressed.
7 He made known his ways unto Moses,
His doings unto the children of Israel.
8 Jehovah is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness.
9 He will not always chide;
Neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.
10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him.
12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
13 Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. GRATITUDE AND PRAISE FOR GOD'S MERCIES, verses 1-5. Bless Jehovah, O my soul; thus the Psalmist addresses himself. "The Semitic languages have no word for *self*. If the Syriac has to render 'a kingdom divided against itself,' it says 'a kingdom divided against its soul.' If it has to render 'yourselves' it must needs say 'your souls.'" And all that is within me—my whole self, my whole being, all my faculties and powers—bless his holy name. As we have often noted, *name* stands for person: bless him who is holy.

"It takes all there is of a man to praise and worship God adequately. Half-hearted praise is quite as much out of place as half-hearted devotion to one's family or country."

Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Forget none of them: take none of them for granted. How often is forgetfulness the cause of ingratitude!

"I believe thanksgiving to be a greater mark of holiness than any other part of worship" (McLeod).

In the two clauses of verse 3 and the first clause of verse 4, Professor Drummond notes in the last part of each, three facts of similarity—the guilt of sin, the stain of sin, and the power of sin: and in the first part of each, three facts of salvation—forgiveness, healing, and redemption. Who forgeteth all thine iniquities, thy crookedness, thy sin! Who healeth all thy diseases.

"Is not the recuperative power of nature God's own healing touch? Had he not endowed our bodies with that which restores them from accident and sickness, no bone would ever set, no wound ever close, no patient ever recover. And so it is with the deeper maladies of the soul" (W. L. Watkinson).

Who redeemeth thy life (thyself) from destruction. Destruction, or the pit, Revised Version. "It stands for Sheol, which is here pictured as claiming the Psalmist when on the point of dying: but Jehovah paid, as it were, the ransom, and so brought him back to health and life. *Redeem* or *ransom,* is here used figuratively" (T. W. Davies). Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.

"God's goodness is not like the barometer—sometimes high, sometimes low, sometimes doubtful. It is the constant quality on which we can ever rely."

Who satisfieth thy desire with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle. "Make thee young and lusty as an eagle" (Coverdale): the eagle is selected as "the liveliest image of strength and vigor." "Pensioners who are provided for

after this royal fashion preserve their brightness and youthfulness. They moult the ageing influences of the years, and every day God imparts a new freshness to their lives" (Thomas Phillips). Compare Is. 40.31.

"I believe that God forgives all my iniquities, heals all my diseases, redeems my life from destruction, crowns me with lovingkindness and tender mercies, and fills my years with good so that my youth is renewed like the eagle, not because I read the story of this experience in the Psalms, but because I experience it in my own life; but perhaps I should never have experienced it in my own life if I had not first read it in the Psalms" (Lyman Abbott).

II. GOD'S REVELATION OF HIS PITY AND LOVE, verses 6-10. Jehovah executeth righteous acts—as in the deliverance from exile in Babylon—and judgment for all that are oppressed—the deliverance of the Chosen people is thought of as judgment on the oppressor.

"I dimly guess from blessing known
Of greater out of sight,
And, with the chastened Psalmist, own
His judgments, too, are right" (Whittier).

He made known his way unto Moses, his doings unto the children of Israel. Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness. "Make known to me, I pray thee, thy ways" had been the prayer of Moses, Ex. 33.13, and in Ex. 34.6, 7 it is written: "And Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." See also Ps. 86.5, 15; 145.8; Joel 2.13; Neh. 9.17.

He will not chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities. Compare Isa. 57.16; Jer. 3.12. Although God is slow to anger, yet he must punish sinners, and thus he is thought of as showing anger which, nevertheless, does not last.

III. THE ETERNAL GOODNESS, verses 11-14. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him. It is as vast as the universe. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. *East* and *west* stand here for distance greater than the imagination can conceive. Compare Isa. 38.17; Micah 7.19. The Psalmist has the same conception of a Father God that Jesus proclaimed: Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear him, he cries. Compare Isa. 49.15; Lk. 15.20. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. An allusion to Gen. 2.7: And Jehovah formed man out of the dust of the ground.

"He knoweth our frame: the Bible abounds in such gracious and tender words. He remembered us in our low estate. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able. The burden is suited to our strength. The revelation is determined by our experience. The pace is regulated to our years" (J. H. Jowett).

IV. MAN IS SHORT-LIVED, BUT GOD'S MERCY ENDURES FOR EVER, verses 15-18. As for man, his days are as grass (few in number); as a flower of the field, which quickly withers, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. See Job 7.10. Jehovah's lovingkindness, on the other hand, is everlasting. For verses 17 and 18 see Ex. 20.6. Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens.

"In my childhood I used to sing, 'There's a Friend for little children, above the bright blue sky.' I know better now. He is nearer to me than I can dream. I used to sing, 'There is a happy land, far, far away.' Now I sing 'There is a happy land, not far away.' The good Father and his home are not in some remote realm. They are very, very near to me" (J. H. Jowett).

His kingdom ruleth over all. Therefore the Psalmist ends his beautiful Psalm by calling upon celestial beings and all his works in all places of his dominion to praise him. "It is like the finale of a grand symphony in which all the instruments blow in one glad song of praise."

"Note the metaphors! The unswerving flight of the eagle far in the blue! The empyrean arch! The distance between sunrise and sunset! The father's pity for his little clinging child! The tiny flower fading in the hot breath of the summer! The golden chain of lovingkindness swinging from its staple in the everlasting Yesterday to that in the everlasting Tomorrow! The chorus of Creation, in which 'the choir invisible,' composed of angels and ministers, suns and stars, seas and mountains, the saints in heaven and the Church on earth, join in unceasing adoration and praise. Gloria in Excelsis! How canst thou be silent, O my soul? Bless his Holy Name!" (F. B. Meyer).

"There are relatively few singing Christians. There are many sighing ones, and not a few of the praying order. More petitions are sent to heaven than thanksgivings, more Misereres than Doxologies" (Thomas Phillips).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle, verse 5. The fable of the eagle's renewing its youth is as follows: The eagle mounts aloft into heaven till he comes near to the seat of the central fire in the sun, when, scorched by the heat, he casts himself down into the sea. Thence he emerges again with new vigor and fresh plumage, till at last in his hundredth year he perishes in the waves.

As far as the east is from the west, verse 12. As thought traveled westward in ancient times it saw the dim coasts and islands of the Mediterranean, and perhaps the mountain of Teneriffe in the farthest distance. As it traveled eastward, it passed through the ring of neighboring nations across the Jordan; saw the wandering encampments of desert tribes; then Mesopotamia, with Nineveh and Babylon guarding its rivers; then the mountains of Persia, and the dream-like lands of India and China beyond. At the utmost limits, mountain-pillars upheld the world, or the edge of its oval disc fell sheer into the waters on the nether deep upon which it floated.

One can realize the wonder and relief of such a man as this writer, as his conscience follows his imagination across the whole enormous breadth of the world. There, where the mountains of the dawn or sunset hardly break the skyline with their faint and shadowy outlines—there, over the edges of the flat earth, where all things end—there, and no nearer, are his sins. From such an one sin, and its wages of death, are indeed very far away.—John Kelman, in Ephemera Eternitatis.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Theme and Date of Psalm 103

This is a beautiful, tender Psalm of thanksgiving and praise to God for all his great mercies, mercies shown to the Psalmist individually and to his nation. It voices his feeling of gratitude for some great national deliverance. Certain peculiarities of language (the Aramaic coloring, the allusions to Job, Jeremiah and the later chapters of Isaiah) have led scholars to refer it to the early years after the return from exile. Because of their sins, the people had been taken into captivity, but God had forgiven them and delivered them and the Psalmist sings his hymn of praise.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

The Psalms are the great hymns which the people sang in their temple-worship. They are "the songs of the heart," the expressions of actual experiences, voicing humility and confession, thanksgiving and praise, fear and hope, anxieties and aspirations and triumph—all the deep and bitter and sweet experiences of life. Some of our best-loved hymns are but variations of the Psalms. The younger generation does not know the Psalms as you perhaps do, certainly not as did your fathers. Our Psalm for today is the old greatly loved Scottish communion Psalm. Help your pupils to see its spirit of gratitude and devotion, the singular beauty of its language, the tenderness, trustfulness and hopefulness of its feeling, its anticipation of the spirit of the New Testament. "It furnishes fit language of thanksgiving for the greater blessings of a more marvelous redemption than that of Israel from Babylon."

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE HABIT OF THANKFULNESS

Beginning the Lesson

The soul is scarcely patient of comment upon this Psalm, much less of analysis. Generation after generation of the redeemed have followed the Psalmist's lead in self-reminder of our eternal debt to the King of Love; and pastoral experience has shown the memory tenacious, even in death, of words so beautiful because of their simplicity. When shaken out of the perilous tendency to compare ourselves with others, when in nakedness of soul before God we realize our sole comfort in his mercy, when the littleness of man would otherwise overwhelm us, this ever-new story of the love of God imparts a new boldness; the news is "too good to be false," and we bespeak the assistance of every denizen of heaven and earth to bless the Covenant-God.

If it be permissible to venture to specify the power of this Psalm, it is surely safe to ascribe it to the assurance of complete forgiveness running through it all, based upon the intelligible grounds of personal experience of peace in believing (1-5), of the revelation of God in history (6, 7), of his own manifesto (8; Ex. 34.6, 7), of his Fatherhood, longing to forgive, yearning to compassionate our frailty (9-17). But one condition does he ask, and that the natural one that the love of such a Father should beget filial love in his children (18); there is no other limitation; all souls are his (19). "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"—J. M. Willoughby.

A Reminder of God's Beneficence

Wordsworth has an oft-quoted passage in which he declares that he is pained at heart because of the thankfulness of men for the little that they have received from him; he felt that their gratitude was so far in excess of his gift or service. But our gratitude can never be in excess of our obligation to the great Giver. When we think of "all his benefits," we think of infinity. Our natural blessings defy calculation, and the spiritual gifts of grace, of which the psalmist chiefly writes in this psalm, are passing wonderful in their richness and vastness. It is charged against the Gentiles, "Because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks." It is a capital sin to be blind and dumb in the presence of the divine goodness; to see the beauty of it, and to rejoice in it, is to give us a new revelation of God and to conform us more entirely to his image. When the prevailing mood of life is gratitude and praise, we are being saved and sanctified every hour.—W. L. Watkinson.

I Will Praise Thee, O Lord, with My Whole Heart

That is a note which is too commonly silent in our religious life. Even many of our consecration pledges avoid any reference to the duty of praise. We have our prayer meetings, and our self-denial weeks and our days of humiliation, but we rarely gather together for the supremely exhilarating business of praise. We extend our hands in supplication, we do not jubilantly uplift them in adoration. There are ten who cry "God be merciful," for one who sings "God be praised."

We come to our God with our complaints, with the sad story of our surging needs; but we do not come nearly enough with our songs, gladly rehearsing our benefits in "the light of his countenance." We must go into the Lord's presence, and very deliberately count our blessings. We must tell the story slowly, in order that our souls may take it in. We must repeat the story until our hearts glow in the contemplation, until we have changed the "spirit of heaviness" for the "garment of praise." As soon as praise warms up our prayers, eagerness will warm up our service. When our lips are laden with the confession of God's mercies, our feet will be swift in "the way of his commandments."—J. H. Jowett.

The Habit of Thankfulness

Thankfulness seems to be a grace rather difficult of expression with some of us. Perhaps it is that we have not practiced it enough. If we were a little more given to it we might not be so awkward at it. And it is such a seemly grace that it were a great pity not to cultivate it.

It certainly ought not to be hard for any of us to feel thankfulness, even if it is not always easy for us to express it. All that any of us would need to do to stir up within himself great waves of gratitude and thankfulness would be to think intelligently and with some little touch of imagination of the blessing and good

with which his life has been filled. Ingratitude is such a dull-witted, stupid sort of thing that it does look altogether unpardonable in men and women of any vision and intelligence. If we could look with any real understanding at all into the life we have been permitted to live this day we would find in it a thousand things to fill our hearts with gladness and gratitude. If we do not see these things it is because our eyes are shut and our souls utterly unresponsive.

It is a good thing, indeed it is an absolutely necessary thing with most of us, to stimulate ourselves to see the good that is in our lives. The old hymn calls it counting our blessings, but whatever name we give it, it is an altogether wholesome exercise. And to try to measure the sum of the good that is in our lives, to cultivate a habit of responding to it in a spirit of appreciation, is to open up a way to happiness and joy in living that too few of us travel upon.—The New Outlook.

Do you give thanks for this or that?
No, God be thanked I am not grateful
In that cold, calculating way, with blessings ranked
As one, two, three, and four—that would be hateful.

I only know that every day brings good above
My poor deserving;
I only feel that in the road of Life true Love
Is leading me along and never swerving.

Whatever gifts and mercies to my lot may fall,
I would not measure
As worth a certain price in praise, or great or small;
But take and use them all with simple measure.

For when we gladly eat our daily bread, we bless
The Hand that feeds us;
And when we tread the Road of Life in cheerfulness,
Our very heart-beats praise the Lord that leads us.—Henry van Dyke.

The Habit of Praise

The attitude of praise is a characteristically Christian attitude. It goes with faith and hope and love. It does not depend upon surroundings; for an attitude is a thing taken toward surroundings, and not a part of them. Praise to God does not depend upon other men. Praise of God's goodness does not depend upon what opportunities the world may offer. The Christian who chooses the habit of praise can practice it all the while, for it depends only upon the presence and love of God, which are everlasting.

Praise teaches the soul, daily, to look beyond the day. If this world were all, praise might sometimes falter. But God's purposes are eternal. The contemplation of God's promises and his love leads the heart on to thoughts far beyond earthly disappointments or trials. Even though the worst happens, God is still in his Heaven, and his children are traveling there every day. The partings of mortality are not hopeless, because immortality will reunite souls for ever, beyond all parting. There is no conceivable crisis in which the faithful Christian may not find praise to lift to God.

No heart full of praise can be small or narrow or powerless. Praise is the language of Heaven, the speech of the angels. The prayer of petition is for the beginner in the Christian life—but the prayer of praise is the mark of the saint. The glory of God shines down daily and hourly into the hearts of those who praise him, and so they always have light, no matter how dark their surroundings. Every Christian can attain to the attitude of praise.—Mark L. Prentiss.

"For what today am I most truly thankful?
Is it for granaries that thy harvests fill?
Is it for lowing herd, or flock so ample?
Or any gift of thine, through sovereign will?

"Oh, no! our joy springs from a fount still higher—
From God himself, the Spring of all our joys,
Because Jehovah is—that holy fire
Throws deepest shade on earth and earthly toys.

"Thou art the Source and Spring of all our gladness,
Eternal pleasures by thy hand are spread;
Thou art the Balm for all our grief and sadness—
We praise and worship thee, our Living Head."

Subjects for Bible Class Discussion

1. The Psalms.

2. What happens to our nation happens to us. This was the attitude of the Psalmist: he thanks God equally for mercies to himself and for mercies to his nation; making himself one with his nation.

3. Is it possible for everyone to keep young at heart, renewing his youth like the eagle?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

THE PRIVILEGE OF WORSHIPING GOD

Beginning the Lesson

For several years nothing had been heard of Livingstone in Africa. Then Stanley was sent to find him, and when at last the great missionary was found he had only three faithful men with him and all his stores were gone. Stanley went on to the coast for supplies and men, and for five long months Livingstone waited. The help came, and he wrote in his Journal: "How thankful I am I cannot express. It is well that the men who were with Mr. Stanley came again to me. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

Livingstone used the first words of the beautiful Psalm which we study today. I hope you know all its words. Let us repeat them together.

Thanksgiving Is a Christian Duty

This is a Psalm of Thanksgiving. The phrase that gives its keynote is the phrase, "Bless the Lord." We can never come into the presence of God without occasion for gratitude and praise, for he is continually doing great things for us. That God may never miss from us the gratitude which is his due, we must train ourselves to think of his benefits to us. It is so easy to forget a dozen mercies. An hour's cloud is sufficient to make us forget all the sunshine. Gipsy Smith tells the story of a crippled boy in an English infirmary, who, when asked what song he would like the Gipsy to sing, replied, "Count your blessings." That is a duty to which we all need to give ourselves. If we "count our blessings," God will never lack his sacrifice of praise.

The thankful life is a great commendation of religion. It is better for ourselves and everybody about us to live in Thanksgiving Street rather than at Grumble Corner. And we do not commend religion by a sour face and a peevish spirit. But we certainly do commend it by a happy and thankful spirit.—J. D. Jones.

Forget Not All His Benefits

In the life of Pastor Herder, whose flock were wood-carvers and chamois-hunters in the high Alps, we are told of a singular system of religious festivals which he invented. Each of his people kept a record of the great crises in his own life, the days when God had most blessed him, and celebrated them as holidays in the original sense of the word, that is, as holy days.

All of his neighbors observed them with him. Thus, one day little presents of milk or flowers were sent to Father Siegel, because on that day five years ago he recovered from a stroke of apoplexy. The next day every one would shake hands with Fritz Hemel, because it was the anniversary of his rescue when the avalanche swept him away. The man whose fête-day it was laid flowers upon the altar and praised God for all the mercies bestowed on him. So it came to pass at last that almost every day in the year was a thanksgiving in which these poor people recognized God's hand leading them tenderly through their hard, bare lives.

"I believe," says John Dennison, "that one of God's messengers, a power sent by him, has been always present with me to guide my way. But there have been times when he has come so close, to turn me away from evil or to bless me, that I could almost feel his touch. Shall I not keep those days holy, and tell my children of them?" Jacob in his journeyings set up an altar to God when any special happiness came to him upon the spot where he had been blessed.

How many thanksgivings do we keep in the year?—The Youth's Companion.

Bless Jehovah, O My Soul

The need for it never comes to an end. "Give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; because his loving-kindness endureth for ever." Don't be grudging with your thanks. Ask yourselves honestly what have you done to deserve so many and such great favors from God and man? It is through no merit of yours; it is, as far as you are concerned, an accident. But if you are ungrateful, that will be no accident. Thankfulness is not all a matter of feeling, as some people think. It is also a matter of habit. Never lie down to sleep when the day is done, or rise in the morning after a night's rest, without some words of thanks to him who provides for your every want. "Whosoever enjoys aught in this world without blessing God for it, as it were robs God," say our sages; and this is so, because to refuse to acknowledge our debt, and to neglect to repay it even by so much as a word of thanks, is not this to rob the Heavenly Giver of the one thing he asks for? And never excuse yourselves on the ground that you have no time. You have years of time in which to receive and enjoy all the lovingkindness of God; surely you have no lack of minutes in which to thank him!—Rabbi Simeon.

How to Learn Thankfulness

I will tell you how you can learn to be thankful. Begin and keep a little book in which you write down every night the pleasant things God has sent you, taking a page for every day. When you first begin, you may find that you have almost nothing to write in your book. But as you go on and learn the habit of watching for the gleams of sunshine and the glints of kindness, you will find that your page gets fuller and fuller, until at last I can imagine your mother saying to you one evening: "Why are you writing so long in that little book in which you write every night before you go to bed? You will spoil your eyes writing in the twilight, for you seem to have more and more to write every evening." Then I think you may put your little book away, for you will have learned the habit of being one of God's cheerful ones. You will have joined the company of the Everywhere Thankful People.—R. C. Gillie, in The Fascinated Child.

Praise God, the Lord!

A beautiful custom long prevailed among the shepherds in the Alpine districts of Piedmont and Savoy, and perhaps it is still observed. As night approaches and the sun has left the valley, but its last rays touch the crests of mountain ridges, the shepherd living highest up on the mountain side uses his Alpine horn as a trumpet and cries to the valley below him, "Praise God, the Lord!" Each shepherd as the cry reaches his ears repeats it, and for many minutes the quiet glen echoes from side to side with the cry of "Praise God, the Lord!"

Our Psalm begins and ends with a call to "bless the Lord." Do we? In our prayers does praise have always a part, is thankfulness always expressed? In our words and actions among others, are we living a life of praise?

There is a saying of an ancient rabbi that the highest angel in heaven is the angel of praise. Probably you know Robert Browning's little poem called The Boy and the Angel. It is the story of a boy who morning, noon and night sang praises to God as he sat at his bench and wrought with his hammer. But after a while he became dissatisfied and longed to do something greater. The angel Gabriel gave him his chance and sang his little song in his stead. But God said:

"Nor day nor night
Now brings the voice of my delight.
I miss my little human praise."

The angel Gabriel could not sing the working-boy's song for him. Everyone is needed in God's choir: let him not miss one little human praise.

Sentence Sermons

Little do we know how we wrong ourselves by shutting out of our prayers the praises of God.—Richard Baxter.

Thanksgiving makes our prayers bold and strong and sweet; feeds and enkindles them as with coals of fire.—Martin Luther.

Every furrow in the Book of Psalms is sown with seeds of thanksgiving.—Jeremy Taylor.

It is a good thing to give thanks unto Jehovah,
And to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.—Ps. 92.1.

REVIEW: PROPHETS AND KINGS OF JUDAH'S DECLINE

GOLDEN TEXT: I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah 31.3

A REVIEW BY MEANS OF ALLUSIONS

To what does each allusion below refer?

How many Christians there are who, like those priests, are miserable because unsanctified! While on every hand opportunities call for the devotion of their energies, they are unfitted to lay hold of them.—J. Stuart Holden.

If ever there was a suffering servant, despised and rejected of men, that servant is the Jewish people.—Jewish Chronicle.

Take the task he sends you gladly,
Let his work your pleasure be;
Answer quickly, when he calleth,
"Here am I, send me, send me."—Daniel March.

With bonds and scorn, and evil will
The world requites its prophets still.—Whittier.

He who shows me the achievements of a brother man touches my lips with a live coal from off the altar.—Carlyle.

We are but poor judges of form or comeliness, and what is lustrous with perfect beauty in God's eyes may be, and generally is, plain and dowdy in men's.—Alexander Maclaren.

God's goodness hath been great to thee;
Let never day nor night unhallow'd pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done.—Shakespeare.

QUESTIONS UPON THE QUARTER'S LESSONS

For Young People and Adults

1. What were Josiah's reforms, and why did they have no permanent effect?
2. Who were the great prophets of the eighth century B.C.?
3. What were the duties of a prophet?
4. What do we call the Book of Consolation?
5. How did Jesus fulfil the words of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah about the Suffering Servant of Jehovah?
6. What persecutions did Jeremiah suffer, and what effect had they upon him?
7. How did Jeremiah proclaim individual responsibility for sin?
8. How did Jeremiah illustrate by contrast the indifference of Judah to the commands of God?
9. How did Jeremiah endeavor to prevent the captivity of Judah, and why was he not successful?
10. Who are the true prophets in our national life?
11. What was the date of the capture of Jerusalem?
12. What caused the fall of the Kingdom of Judah?

For Intermediates and Seniors

1. What prophet's mission began with a glorious experience? What was it, and how did it affect him? Explain the meaning of the use which the seraphim made of each pair of wings. What was the lesson of the vision?
2. What king knew that ritual was made for man and not man for ritual? How did he show this knowledge? What message did he send to the remnant left in the Northern Kingdom? When had the Northern Kingdom fallen? How did this king lead his people back to God?
3. How is God pictured in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah? What words in this chapter remind us of John the Baptist?
4. How was Jesus Christ a "man of sorrows"? How was he despised and rejected? Why did he suffer? Repeat Isaiah 53.1-12.

5. What great work did Josiah, the king, undertake? What was found and by whom? What did the king do about it? How may we today lose and find our Bible?

6. How did Jeremiah receive his call to be a prophet? How did he deliver God's message? What was the result to him of his warnings?

7. How did Jeremiah tell the people that to obey is better than sacrifice? How did he call upon them to obey God? Of what did he assure the people?

8. What proverb did Jeremiah quote, how did he change it, and what did he mean by the change? What was the new covenant between God and his people which Jeremiah announced? What is the voice of God in the heart?

9. What sort of king was Zedekiah? Why was Jeremiah hated? What persecution did the prophet endure for which Zedekiah was responsible? How was he freed?

10. For what are the Rechabites famous? How were their principles tested? Why did Jeremiah put them to this test? What are the benefits of total abstinence?

11. How and by whom and when was Jerusalem captured? Where were the people taken? Where was Babylon? What warnings had they had?

12. Repeat the first thirteen verses of the one hundred and third Psalm.

WRITTEN WORK

For Young People and Adults

1. The Relation of Judah to the Great Powers.
2. Causes which Led to the Captivity.
3. The Prophet Isaiah.
4. The Prophet Jeremiah.
5. An Appraisement of Zedekiah.
6. The Symbolic Teaching of Jeremiah.
7. The Book of Isaiah.
8. The Book of Jeremiah.
9. The Exiles' Book of Consolation.
10. The Servant of Jehovah.

For Intermediates and Seniors

1. A Great Vision.
2. The Finding of a Book.
3. A Noted Test and its Lesson.
4. Jeremiah's Call and Consecration.
5. Jeremiah's Imprisonment and Rescue.
6. Jeremiah and the Princes.
7. Jeremiah's Call to Obedience.
8. God's Law in the Heart.
9. Judah Taken Captive.
10. A Psalm of Praise.

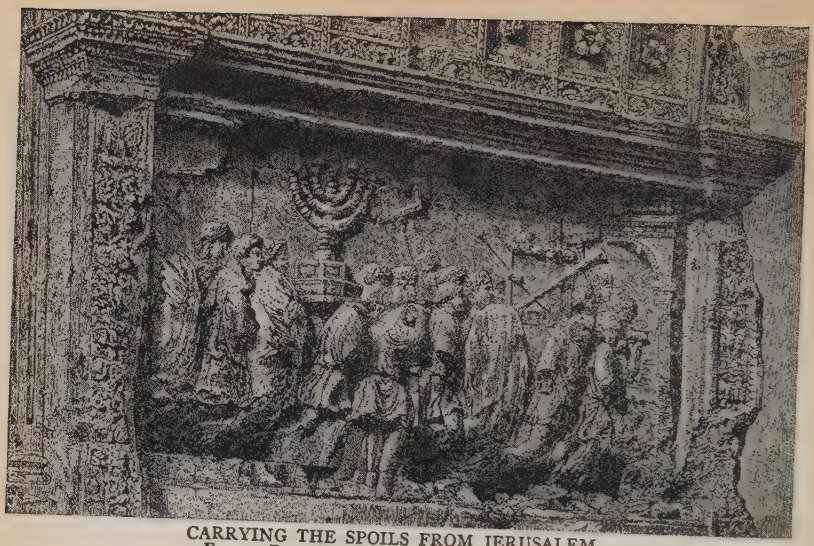
QUESTIONS TO BE ASSIGNED FOR THE NEXT LESSON

For Young People and Adults

1. Describe Babylon. 2. What counsel did Jeremiah give the Jews of the first deportation? (Jer. 29.) 3. Read the entire lesson: Ezek. 1.1 to 3.27; 8.1-4; 11.22-25; 24.15-24; 33.30-33. 4. How is the inspiration of the prophet symbolized? 5. What does the phrase "Son of Man" indicate? 6. What was the purpose of Ezekiel's vision? 7. What was the purpose of Ezekiel's stoic courage at the death of his wife? 8. How did Ezekiel's methods resemble Jeremiah's? 9. What was the prophet's responsibility? 10. What is a pastor's responsibility for others? 11. What is your responsibility for the spiritual welfare of others?

For Intermediates and Seniors

1. When did Ezekiel go to Babylon? 2. Where was Babylon? 3. Where was Tel-abib? 4. What do we learn about Ezekiel from Ezek. 1.3; 3.15; 29.17; 40.1? 5. Read Whittier's poem about Ezekiel. 6. Tell the story of the boiling caldron, 24.1-27. What was its lesson? 7. What was Ezekiel's responsibility? 8. Who was the first man mentioned in the Bible as taught by God that he was responsible for his brother? (Gen. 4.9.) 9. If it falls to our lot to warn others, in what spirit should we give the warning?



CARRYING THE SPOILS FROM JERUSALEM
From a Bas-relief on the Arch of Titus, Rome

THIRD QUARTER

PROPHETIC TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP OF JUDAH: THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION

(Second Half of a Six-Months' Course)

Aim: To lead the pupils in discovering and appreciating how God, through prophets and other leaders, gave help and guidance to the people of Judah, in order that the pupils may come to see the hand of God in their own lives and in all human affairs.

Lesson I—July 7

THE STORY OF EZEKIEL

GOLDEN TEXT: As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Ezekiel 33.11.

LESSON. Ezekiel 1.1-3; 2.1 to 3.27; 8.1-4; 11.22-25; 24.15-24; 33.30-33

DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 121

EZEKIEL 3.4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. 5 For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel; 6 not to many peoples of a strange speech and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, if I sent thee to them, they would hearken unto thee. 7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stiff heart. 8 Behold, I have made thy face hard against their faces, and thy forehead hard against their foreheads. 9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house. 10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thy heart, and hear with thine ears. 11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

24.15 Also the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, 16 Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet thou shalt neither mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. 17 Sigh, but not aloud, make no mourning for the dead; bind thy headtire upon thee, and put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. 18 So I spake unto the people in the morning; and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded.

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EZEKIEL (*J. J. TISSOT*)

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. EZEKIEL'S VISION, CALL, AND COMMISSION, 1.1 to 2.7. See The Historical Background. In the first chapter Ezekiel describes the indescribable—the complicated vision which he had of God—the wonderful chariot, the fiery cloud, the four living creatures, in their midst the perpetual flash of lightning and the glow of fire, above them the crystal firmament, on it a sapphire throne, and on the throne Almighty God himself.

The prophet fell prone upon his face, till the awful silence was broken by the voice of God bidding him stand upon his feet and receive his commission for service.

"More important than the attitude of worship is the attitude of readiness for action.

"And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me on my feet," Ezekiel declares. "This is the divine energy, enabling a man to come to the height of his manhood, and so to find readiness to hear the word of the Lord" (G. Campbell Morgan). The service to which God called the prophet was to proclaim to the rebellious people the divine message, the "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah." The Israelites have been rebellious throughout their national history; they are imprudent and stiff-hearted and they may not listen, but the prophet must not be disturbed by their words and looks, even though there are "briers and thorns" and he dwells "among scorpions"—symbols of the opposition he may meet.

II. EZEKIEL'S INSPIRATION, 2.8 to 3.3. That Ezekiel was divinely inspired, that the message which he was to proclaim was communicated to him by God, is symbolized by his eating at God's command a book [roll] on which was inscribed God's message. "The lamentation, mourning, and woe inscribed in the visionary book do, in point of fact, faithfully describe the general contents and temper of Ezekiel's message throughout the earlier part of his ministry and the first half of his book, that is, down to the fall of Jerusalem.

"This conception of inspiration implies that the message he is to deliver must be his own. It is God's ultimately, but Ezekiel must make it his own, work it into the very life of his being, assimilate it, as we should say—this is the meaning of the strange language of 3.3—until it is himself that he is uttering. When he eats the roll, bitter as are its contents, it is as sweet as honey in his mouth, for it is sweet to do the will of God, to be trusted with tasks for him" (A. S. Peake).

"This finely suggests that the coöperation of man is indispensable to the adequate reception of a message from God. The roll is a gift of God, but the man has to eat it. The message is, we may say, supernaturally communicated, but it has to be appropriated and assimilated. The man has to make the gift of God his own" (J. E. McFadyen).

III. THE STRENUOUSNESS OF HIS TASK, 3.4-11. The prophet hears himself addressed as "Son of man," a term which occurs some ninety times in the book. By it is suggested the great contrast between the human prophet and the omnipotent God. "Go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them"; thus he feels himself constrained. "Now that the message is part of himself, he is urged by the voice to proclaim it without flinching. A prophet with a message of lamentation and mourning and woe is never welcome. But gifts are useless unless they are used, a message is impotent until it is delivered" (J. E. McFadyen).

It is one thing to have convictions, another thing to have the courage of convictions.

He is not sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language which he cannot understand. Heathen foreigners would have listened to him; his task is infinitely harder, he must deliver his message to his own people who can indeed understand his words but will not listen, can hear but will not heed; for they will not believe the truths he will utter and they have not given heed to the God who sends him. For all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stiff heart. "The hardening of the natural conscience which Isaiah foresaw as the inevitable result of his own ministry is largely accomplished, and Ezekiel traces it to its source in a defect of will, an aversion to the truth" (John Skinner).

Though highly privileged, they were not so responsive to God's messenger as heathen people would have been. "Woe unto thee, Chorazim! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" Jesus declared, "for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you."

"As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead; fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house." Ezekiel abounds in figures of speech. "With resolute face the prophet is to go forward to meet their hard and resolute faces, and fearlessly deliver the message of God who has called and can equip and sustain him." Again the prophet is directed to receive the messages of God and deliver them to the people, to tell them "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah" whether they will heed them or not.

Whitefield and a companion were much amazed one night at a public-house by a set of blaspheming gamblers in a room adjoining theirs. "I will go and reprove them," said Whitefield. His companion remonstrated with him in vain. He went, but his words were unavailing. "What have you got by it?" his companion questioned. "A soft pillow," he patiently replied, and soon fell asleep.

IV. THE PROPHET'S REACTION, 3.12-15. "That, then, was the summons he seemed to hear from the awful Figure upon the throne of the mysterious chariot. Then once more, the whirr of the wings and the roar of the wheels were heard, and the chariot departed leaving the prophet, on return to normal consciousness, in a state of reaction graphically described as bitterness and heat of spirit. In this mood he found his way to Tel-abib, a colony of his fellow-exiles, apparently at or near his home, where he remained for a week in a state of utter stupefaction, dumb and motionless" (A. S. Peake).

V. THE PASTORAL CHARGE, 3.16-21. At the end of a week another message came to Ezekiel: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel." A watchman's duty is to warn of danger. If the prophet should fail to warn the wicked he would be held responsible for their fate. Compare Paul's words at Corinth, Acts 18.6. The warning was Ezekiel's duty, but not the result of the warning. See Ezekiel 14.14; 1 Tim. 4.16.

"Out! out to brave the odds!
'Tis well. Up with the sail!
The wind is God's!"

The righteous, too, must be warned not to swerve from the path of righteousness when God shall lay a stumbling block before them, something which causes them to stumble and fall. "This difficult phrase does not mean that God seeks to make the righteous fall, but that the temptations of the righteous are under God's providential control. Where there is a temptation he also sends a warning, and the two constitute a discipline by which the righteous man is tested, and under which he has an opportunity of moral growth" (Dummelow). The prophet will be held responsible if the righteous fall and he has not warned him, but if the warning has been given, the prophet will be guiltless.

"Verily to a prophet silence may be sin; to withhold the word of the Lord from fear or for favor, is to be involved in the wickedness of the evildoers. All this gives the most solemn pause to those responsible for speaking the words of God to men" (G. Campbell Morgan).

VI. THE ALLEGORY OF THE CALDRON, AND EZEKIEL'S SIGNIFICANT SILENCE, 24.1-27. On the day that the siege of Jerusalem began, Ezekiel spoke to the exiles already in Babylon a parable, or allegory. A rusty pot filled with water and meat is set upon the fire and boiled. Piece by piece the meat is then taken out and the empty pot set back upon the fire to burn away the rust. The caldron is Jerusalem, the boiling is the siege, the pieces of meat are its inhabitants who are to be taken off into captivity, the rust is the wickedness of the city which is to be burned out by fire. On an earlier occasion princes of the people had said that Jerusalem was a caldron, and they were the flesh, and by that had intended to declare their safety (Ezek. 11.3). Ezekiel now turns their figure against them, declaring by it, not their safety, but their judgment.

Ezekiel spoke this prophetic parable in the morning, and in the evening of the same day his wife, "the desire of his eyes," died, but in obedience to a divine command he wept not nor made any sign of mourning. Loosing the headdress, baring the feet, and covering the lips, were signs of mourning (Lev. 10.6; 2 S. 15.30); accordingly, he was directed to bind his headdress upon him, put his shoes upon his feet, and cover not his lips. And eat not the bread of men, is also added, referring, it is explained, to the food offered by sympathetic friends. When the people inquired the reason for his strange behavior, he told them that his conduct was a symbol of what theirs would be when they learned that Jerusalem had fallen, that the desire of their eyes, the sanctuary, was profaned, that their sons and daughters left behind in the city had fallen by the sword. Stupor would seize them; their sorrow would be too deep for words.

"Ezekiel's is an unmatched devotion to the will of God, and the suppression of every private interest by its urgency. Never must personal considerations enter into competition with God's call to service. Those who follow Christ are never off duty. This was Christ's own pathway, along which he found unspeakable compensation" (J. Stuart Holden).

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Exiles of the First Deportation

Again we turn backward to a time before the final destruction of Jerusalem. About two-thirds of all the Jewish exiles in Babylon were in the first deportation with Jehoiachin, 597 B.C. They were the leading Jews, princes, officers, soldiers and artisans: Ezekiel (17.3-6, 12-14) calls them the best of the nation. They fared better in Babylon than did the second group of exiles after the fall of Jerusalem eleven years later. During the first ten years of the exile, at least, the Jews kept in close touch with their kinsmen in Judah. The prophet Jeremiah advised them in a letter to build houses and dwell in them, to plant gardens and eat the fruit, to rear up families, to avoid insurrection, to find their prosperity in the city to which they had been carried. Though they were homesick for their land and city and temple, their material prosperity in Babylon seems to have been far greater than at home. Professor Kent says, in his history of the Babylonian Period: "The peculiar genius for trade, which the Jews have manifested ever since, was probably first developed amidst the favoring conditions which surrounded them in the land of the two rivers. In contract tablets recently found at Nippur, and dating from the earlier part of the Persian period, many familiar Old Testament names occur, showing that by that time the Jews had been drawn into the streams of trade which flowed so strongly to and from Babylon."

The Prophet Ezekiel

The prophets of the Babylonian exile were the great prophet who gave us chapters 40-55 of Isaiah (recall Lesson III of the Second Quarter) and the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel was the son of Buzi, a priest of Jerusalem, and therefore a member of the "aristocracy," for only the king himself ranks higher than the priests. It is probable that in Jerusalem Ezekiel heard Jeremiah speak, for there are many passages in his book which recall Jeremiah's words. The wickedness of his nation and her impending doom may have been interpreted to him by Jeremiah. Ezekiel was one of those deported by Nebuchadnezzar into captivity with Jehoiachin. There he lived in a community of exiles at Tel-abib on the banks of the Chebar. He had some means, for he lived in his own house (3.24; 8.1). Five years after reaching there, he was called to be a prophet: the first three chapters of his book give an account of his vision and commission. His ministry covered almost half of the period of the exile, 592-570 B.C.

Although his message was to his fellow exiles, he was a man of broad outlook and wide interests, and he identified his immediate community with the Jewish nation as a whole. "No other prophet was more resourceful, diligent, methodical, and practical than Ezekiel. He was a solid preacher in a sad situation. No one could have met the needs of the captives better than he."

The Book of Ezekiel

It was the fashion, Ezekiel tells us, for his countrymen to come and listen to him, his words relieved the monotony of their existence, they talked about them as they stood in the doors of their houses, and he was to them "as a very lovely song of

one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument." These sermons he committed to writing even as preachers do now, that they might reach a larger parish, the Jews wherever scattered. His written words show that he meditated long over them, and gave careful thought to their literary form. Throughout he speaks in the first person, humbly referring to himself as the "son of man." Most of his prophecies he dated, the last being 570 B.C.

Ezekiel enforced the lessons of the exile, and endeavored to prepare the people for their future destiny. "He was the potter who took up the tools of preceding priests and prophets, and on the wheel of his age molded the external religious life of his race."

The first half of the book, chapters 1-24, is a stern message of condemnation and judgment. The Jewish colony on the Chebar was mainly composed of men who had belonged to the ruling class in Jerusalem and were anxiously awaiting the course of events and expecting a speedy return to their old place of authority there. Ezekiel told them that Judah's desperate struggle for independence was in vain, that she must be punished for her sins. This was unpopular prophecy. When the catastrophe came, when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and the people exiled, Ezekiel was honored as the prophet of the Lord and his words were heeded.

The second half of the book, chapters 25-48, is a message of consolation and promise, wherein Ezekiel emerges, as Professor McFadyen says, as a figure that is practically new in the spiritual history of Israel, becoming what in modern language we should call a pastor, applying himself to "the cure of souls."

The book abounds in symbolic figures—metaphors, parables and allegory—symbolic actions and grand visions. His symbolic pictures are at times rude, even grotesque, but, as Dr. W. D. Jordan reminds us, though this wealth of oriental imagery may be foreign to our taste, it was very dear to good men in those days, and has exerted a wonderful influence over later literature.

"It may be frankly admitted that the book of Ezekiel lacks much of Isaiah's majestic charm and has none of Jeremiah's melting passion of tenderness, nor does any of it rise to his amazing heights of spiritual insight," writes Professor R. W. Rogers. "Some of the visions have fantastic figures, or so they seem to our sophisticated Western eyes, and there are not wanting patches of a somewhat arid or mechanical ritualism. But when these things have been said, all deductions from his fame have surely been made.

"He has, on the other hand be it said, a fresh and vivid imagination truly poetic, and there are whole chapters in his book filled with inspired visions and burning eloquence. Moreover, he is the true father of ecclesiastical Judaism, and that would alone make him one of the greatest figures in the ancient oriental world. Judaism is still a living faith, and men of mark in every form of human endeavor share in its beliefs, practices and life, and the man who more than any other gave that vast and powerful system its special origin is worthy of our close attention. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that some of the underlying ideas of the ritual system of Roman Catholic Christianity may be traced back through Judaism to him. A great man was this man."

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Ezekiel settled at Tel-abib, by the Chebar. Two tablets excavated at Nippur (south of Babylon) dated in the reign of Artaxerxes I (464-424 B.C.) have a reference to the large navigable canal Chebar in southern Babylonia. The name *Tel-abib* means *Hill of the Deluge,* and is a name given in Babylonia to many mounds which earlier floods had formed. Tel-abib was in the fertile land between the Euphrates and the Tigris, not far to the east of Babylon and connected with it by canals.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

The true teacher must have a vision and a message. The vision of God, expressed partly in terms of his Babylonian environment, came to Ezekiel after he had been brooding for five years upon circumstances and the future of his fellow-countrymen. To the prepared heart and mind, open to the teachings of God through Scripture and experience, the vision and the message will come. We cannot say truly until we see clearly.

The teacher must make the message absolutely his own. It must be not only God's message but his own. He must assimilate it so completely that it has become

part of himself and that he can deliver it naturally and spontaneously. He must speak of things he has experienced, tested, made his own. He must eat the roll.

The teacher must not be without courage. An unwelcome message is sure of a hostile reception, but the speaker must not be afraid. He must, of course, be nice and tactful, he must speak the truth in love; but he must fear God, and not his audience. Tell them, Thus saith the Lord, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; and be not dismayed at their looks. The teacher's duty is to every member of his class. Each and all need stimulus and warnings. With those who are definitely bad or careless, this is obvious; but it is no less true of the others. For every one, as long as he is alive, there is always danger and temptation ahead; and it is always sadly possible that the righteous man may turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity. So while the bad must be weaned from evil, the good must be no less jealously watched over, and warned, and strengthened in whatsoever things are true and honorable, just and pure, lovely and of good report.—J. E. McFadyen, in The Pilgrim Teacher.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

A PROPHET PASTOR

Beginning the Lesson

Today we study the prophet of the exile, a younger contemporary of Jeremiah who is probably not as well known to you as the latter. The two prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, were very unlike in the circumstances of their lives. Storm and stress were Jeremiah's portion; calm and repose Ezekiel's. We know and sympathize with Jeremiah; we know little about Ezekiel and cannot always readily enter into his point of view. In Professor Kent's words: "Ezekiel's character combined those qualities which fitted him to be a leader of his own and immediately succeeding generations, but which do not commend him so strongly to the present. That intensity, bordering almost upon insanity, which led him to sit seven days in blank amazement among the Jewish colonists at Tel-abib before delivering his message of denunciation, seems incongruous, except in the tense atmosphere of the exile. His language frequently seems mere hyperbole until the situation which called it forth is appreciated. His repetitions and minute details are tiresome to one who does not realize how obtuse were his hearers."

Continue with The Historical Background.

The Situation in Babylonia

They must have suffered from the contrast between Babylonia and Palestine, those exiles. They were mountaineers settled on the dead level. As far as the eye could see there were here and there mounds, ruins of ancient towns and cities, but the old-time mountains nowhere in sight. What inexpressible homesickness must have come over them! Babylonia is almost east of New Orleans, and the soil, climate, and general conditions are very much the same except there is less water. The whole country is interlaced with canals for irrigation.

The exiles fell into four classes: first the political class made up of the nobility, many of whom were perhaps given light sentences. Secondly, the property holders, induced to join the deported and given special privileges in their new homes. Thirdly, the rank and file of active rebels, who were set rigorous tasks under compulsion. Finally, the rank and file who were not especially obnoxious and who were put to work in various occupations. Of course they would all continue as far as possible the lines of work to which they were used. Craftsmen would continue their various crafts, and farmers would be employed on the farm. The rebuilding of old communities and the extension of the canal system would require an immense amount of labor. What they became afterwards would depend upon their personal efficiency.

The general policy of Babylonia was more or less liberal to the deported. Probably the chief community of the Jews was on the canal Chebar, where Ezekiel lived. They were encouraged to build homes. Jeremiah so wrote them. Their church life was without the forms of religion except as they invented new methods of expressing their spiritual experiences. The fasts, the synagogue, the Sabbath, came to the fore. Many gave themselves to thought, to meditation, and to writing. Some of the greatest books of the Old Testament came out of that marvelous period.

They seem to have had a sort of internal government by elders who, at regular intervals, resorted to Ezekiel for counsel. They were for the first time up against

an imperial world power in a way hitherto unknown to them. All their conceptions of life had to be reconstructed. The relation of the individual to God, the character of God himself, had to be thought through again. The nation was gone, hence God must be more than the God of the nation. The one central figure in all the thousands of captives was Ezekiel, the priest from Jerusalem.

By the canal of Chebar one day he saw in a vision a magnificent airplane come whirring out of the north with symbols of the throne of God above it. The popular conception of God was that he lived in Jerusalem and was confined to that territory. This was a symbolic representation of his removal from the promised land to Babylonia to take his abode among the people, having deserted the temple. A voice called to the prostrated Ezekiel, overwhelmed at the glory of the mighty God, to stand upon his feet. Then he was commissioned to speak to the rebellious and impudent people whether they would hear or forbear. But he must first digest the book he is to deliver, eat the roll, make it his own, get it into his system. Then follows a long series of symbolic actions and addresses intended to bring home to the people that Jerusalem was destined to fall, that they must adjust themselves to this condition.—John A. Rice, in The Old Testament in the Life of Today.

Continue with Explanations and Comments.

Ezekiel a Prophet Pastor

The nation was dead; the individuals were alive. With wonderful courage and optimism and faith Ezekiel painted for his disheartened people the glorious future when they should be restored to their own land. To him more than to any other man is due the change of a portion of the people from discouraged, passive exiles into hopeful, determined Jews who finally rebuilt Jerusalem.

"No prophet ever took himself or his call more seriously," writes Dr. A. S. Peake in his Commentary on the Bible. "He devoted to his ministry all the powers of mind, heart, and imagination. He pleaded with individual souls; he preached to the people—and there is proof that he was a most attractive preacher (33.32); and he planned for the national reconstruction in that future in which, even when the outlook was blackest, he never ceased to believe. No influence was more potent than his in the shaping of that Judaism which has lived on unshaken through the centuries. It is seen in his transcendental conception of God, in whose presence Ezekiel feels himself to be but a poor frail 'son of man.' It is seen in his dogma of individual retribution. It is seen in his apocalyptic vision of the great assault to be made one day upon the holy land by heathen hordes, who will in the end be defeated ignominiously and forever. It is seen above all in his passionate love of a minutely organized worship, which perhaps no single thinker did so much to shape and guide as he. When we consider the hopes he encouraged, the movements he initiated, the visions he held before the eyes of his contemporaries, the influence he has exerted on posterity, we cannot deny him a place in the front rank of the great men of Israel."

Ezekiel's Warning

In the prophecy of Ezekiel there is a significant "Woe" pronounced against the religious leaders of the time: "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?" If we translate these words into the vernacular we probably must infer that the persons contemplated had been guilty of turning a profession into a trade. As they stand, however, the words are capable of another interpretation, and so interpreted they are a comment upon the danger of precisely that individualism in religion which is so characteristic of the teaching of this prophecy. They warn the religious leader against the use of his office as primarily an occasion and opportunity for self-culture. In some form or other this warning ought to appear in every ordination, installation, and induction charge.—Willard J. Sperry, in Reality in Worship.

Joseph Parker's Idea of a Prophet Pastor

We are not to suppose that faithful ministry is an easy task. No man can continually remember his age and yet be living a luxurious life, unless indeed he be the victim of hypocrisy, or the tool of some vicious hallucination. The prophets of the Lord have always been opposed to the age in which they lived. Whenever the ministry has fallen into accord with the age, it is the ministry that has gone down. A reproachful, corrective, stimulating voice should always be characteristic of a spiritual ministry. No evil should be able to live in its presence, and no evil

custom, how fashionable or popular soever, should be able to lift up its head without condemnation in the presence of a man who is filled with the burden or doctrine of the Lord.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Am I my brother's keeper? This question first asked in the childhood of the race, we are today taking more and more seriously. Professor Toy calls the third chapter of Ezekiel the earliest known formulation of moral responsibility of man for man.

2. Ezekiel the churchman. See Chapter IX of Great Characters of the Old Testament, by Robert W. Rogers.

3. Is it possible to bear bereavement as Ezekiel did?

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is said in this chapter about Ezekiel's responsibility as a watchman? 2. What did Paul tell the elders of Ephesus as to his being "pure from the blood of all men"? 3. About everyone's accountability for his own sins? 4. Compare Ezekiel 3.17-21; 18.1-32, and 33.1-20. 5. What characteristic of Ezekiel's writing is shown in our lesson text?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

THE DUTY OF WARNING OTHERS

Beginning the Lesson

From time to time a number of beautiful pictures have been stolen from the Louvre at Paris, and now the authorities keep two watchdogs in the galleries at night which no thief could prevent from giving warning of his presence. The prophet Isaiah once accused the priests of his day of being like dumb watchdogs which did not bark.

In the Book of Ezekiel we hear that the prophet of the Lord could not be dumb, that it was his task to warn the people. Where was Ezekiel when he told of the lesson he had had from God? (Historical Background and Text Explained.)

How the Burden of the Prophet Fell on Ezekiel

A sad and thoughtful youth, I went
With Israel's early banishment;
And where the sullen Chebar crept,
The ritual of my fathers kept.
The water for the trench I drew,
The firstling of the flock I slew,
And, standing at the altar's side,
I shared the Levite's lingering pride.
That still, amidst her mocking foes,
The smoke of Zion's offering rose.
In sudden whirlwind, cloud and flame
The Spirit of the Highest came!
Before mine eyes a vision passed,
A glory terrible and vast;
With dreadful eyes of living things,
And sounding sweep of angel wings,
With circling light and sapphire throne
The flame-like form of One thereon,
And voice of that dread Likeness sent
Down from the crystal firmament!
The burden of a prophet's power
Fell on me in that fearful hour.—Whittier.

Continue with Explanations and Comments.

Facing a Hard Task

One who has the spirit of the self-righteous Pharisee, the holier-than-thou attitude, cannot wisely warn another of sin. Love must prompt and guide the one who gives the warning. It is not easy to accept reproof from another, even when our conscience tells us that it is merited, but when we see that the other has only

our best good at heart, we can be great enough to receive it in the spirit given, and profit from it.

A writer in The Youth's Companion gives this school incident:

Cara Willis, half-startled, half-amused, faced the messengers. It was the first time that she had been summoned—of course it was some joke. She tossed aside her calculus.

"What is the charge?" she asked.

"You will hear in court," they answered. It seemed to Cara that they were embarrassed.

The court was sitting when they entered. Again it seemed to Cara that there was a curious air of constraint in the room.

"Upon what charge am I summoned, your honor?" she asked.

"The clerk will read the charges."

The clerk rose. She adored Cara Willis, and her voice actually trembled.

"Whereas"—the girls were not particularly strong upon legal formulæ—"it has been declared by witnesses that upon January 20th Cara Willis kept Mrs. Alvord standing in a drafty hall ten minutes while she was saying good-by, in consequence of which, said Mrs. Alvord was ill with a cold and had to give up a trip she had planned;

"And whereas, upon the 25th, Cara Willis, calling upon May Carver 'just for a moment,' unlawfully detained her eleven moments, thus causing her to miss her trolley and lose half of her concert;

"And whereas, Cara Willis, one day later, January 26th, held Ellen Frisbie in conversation upon the door-steps seven minutes, thus making her miss her train and an appointment in town;

"And whereas, it is the habit of Cara Willis always and everywhere to spend from seven to twenty-seven minutes saying good-by, thus causing endless inconvenience to her friends and acquaintances,

"Therefore she is summoned before the high court to declare if there is any reason why she—the said Cara Willis—should not be considered a thief, and receive due punishment for her crime."

The room was very still. Cara Willis looked about the circle. She was not laughing now; in the flushed, entreating faces she read how hard it had been for them, her friends.

"You are," she said slowly, "the pluckiest dears I ever knew. I—I never knew I was like that. The prisoner pleads guilty."

Then suddenly—it was most disorderly—the court broke into cheers.

How to Reprove

We have not always to be indulging in quieting words of comfort; we are to use the clarion, and arouse men out of sleep. But our reproof must be backed by our lives. Our condemnation must be pervaded by grace. We must not move among men as critics and cynics, but as friends who honestly seek their good. Our swords must be dipped into the healing virtues of love. Our reproofs must be medicated and so heal the very wounds they make. Surely this is a ministry worthy of the followers of Christ—to do the difficult thing, and to speak the difficult word. One thing is very sure: the world is waiting for such disciples.—J. H. Jowett.

Sentence Sermons

When we disavow being keeper to our brother, we're his Cain.—George Eliot.

It needs a very humble tongue on the one hand, as well as a very humble ear on the other, to speak and to hear words of reproof.—Hugh Black.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is the great lesson for you of verses 8 and 9? 2. What does our Golden Text mean? 3. What is the great lesson for you of verses 12-16? 4. When you have done wrong, do you sometimes think that some one else is responsible? 5. Is any one but yourself ever really responsible?

EZEKIEL TEACHES PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

GOLDEN TEXT: Each one of us shall give account of himself to God. Romans 14.12

LESSON Ezekiel 18.1-32; 33.1-20 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 125

EZEKIEL 33.7 So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand. 9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it, and he turn not from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.

10 And thou, son of man, say unto the house of Israel: Thus ye speak, saying, Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live? 11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 12 And thou, son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall he that is righteous be able to live thereby in the day that he sinneth. 13. When I say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in his iniquity that he hath committed, therein shall he die. 14 Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; 15 if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that which he had taken by robbery, walk in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. 16 None of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE PROPHET'S RESPONSIBILITY, verses 7-9. See The Historical Background and recall Section V of Explanations and Comments, last lesson. Ezekiel is set as a watchman unto the house of Israel. He must hear the word of Jehovah and he must proclaim it; for as a watchman he is responsible for warning the people of the consequences of sin. He must know that God punishes wickedness, and he must warn the wicked from his way. If he fails in his duty of warning and the wicked man dies in his iniquity, the prophet is "blood guilty," accountable to God for that man. If, however, the prophet warns the man and the man fails to heed him, the prophet has "delivered his soul," he is free from guilt in the matter. His was the responsibility, not of producing obedience, but of uttering the warning. Recall how Paul declared to the elders of Ephesus that he shrank not from declaring unto them anything that was profitable, and taught them publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God; wherefore he testified unto them that he was pure from the blood of all men, for he had ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears, Acts 20.17-31.

"No one of us is free from the danger of taking spiritual obligation too lightly. If we are Christ's disciples at all, there is committed to us 'the word of reconciliation.' We are put in trust with a gospel which is intimately connected with the destinies of men. It is within our power to speak words which make an eternal difference to those who hear them; and upon our faithfulness may depend their opportunity of realizing the only way of escape and life. And yet how often are we content with something much less passionate than the service of a true watchmen!" (J. Stuart Holden).

II. GOD'S UNWILLINGNESS THAT ANY SHOULD PERISH, verses 10, 11. It is useless to repent, so some of the watchman's despairing hearers would say: "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them; how then can we live?" To them he must make known that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked: his pleasure lies in their turning from their wickedness and living: "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "Obviously the prophet is not here thinking of natural death, but since in the Old Testament death means the descent into Sheol, where there is no communion with God, and since in a period like Ezekiel's, death is so often associated with

violence and misery, it comes naturally to be used for the loss of all that is worth having."

"'Why will ye die.' Every word is emphatic. Why—show God or man one reason. Will—a determination not to be saved, or a voluntary listlessness about salvation—can prevent you. Ye—children of so many mercies, fed and supported by a kind God all your life; ye—who are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ; ye—who have made many promises to give up yourselves to God. Die! What is this? A separation from God and the glory of his power for ever! Die—forfeiting all the purposes for which your immortal souls were made. Why, then, will ye die?" (Adam Clarke).

III. EACH ONE SHALL GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF TO GOD, verses 12-16. God, through Ezekiel, warns the righteous people that their righteousness in the past will not help them if they backslide; and encourages the wicked by telling them that their past wickedness will not destroy them if they repent and cease from evil doing. A man's fate is not so determined by his evil past as to make a change to righteousness impossible. "If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that which he had taken by robbery, walk in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die." "The fact that Ezekiel defines righteousness in terms of outward conduct has led to his being accused of the error of legalism in his moral conceptions. He has been charged with resolving righteousness into a sum of separate virtues. It is a mistake to suppose that the prophet is concerned only about the external act and is indifferent to the state of heart from which it proceeds. It is true that he does not attempt to penetrate beneath the surface of the outward life. He does not analyze motives. But this is because he assumes that if a man keeps God's laws he does it from a sincere desire to please God, and with a sense of the righteousness of the law to which he subjects his life" (John Skinner).

None of his sins that he hath committed shall be remembered against the one who turns from his iniquity and does that which is lawful and right.

"Let us thankfully accept this assurance that when the prodigal comes back to his father, none of his sins shall be remembered against him. What a world of comfort there is in the divine assurance that sin, which has been confessed, and forsaken, and put away by the blood of Christ, shall never be cast up on the shores of eternity" (F. B. Meyer).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, 33.7. A modern policeman walking about the streets among the people, while no enemy is near to make anybody afraid, furnishes a very poor illustration and gives a very poor idea of the spectacular position and performance of the watchman of an ancient city. When a city lay in slumber it was behind high, strong walls. The great gates were fast closed and barred. About those gates at any time might gather an armed host, the greatest precaution having been taken that no advance notice of its coming should be given. So, while the city slumbered, the watchman watched upon the walls.—M. G. Kyle.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ezekiel 3.17-21; 18.5-29; 33.7-16

Our text today is an expansion of that of last week, 3.17-21, and a condensed repetition of 18.5-29. The thought and language of this passage which we now study and of 18.5-29 are closely parallel. "Ezekiel's own experience and that of his fellow-exiles brought the problem which this doctrine seeks to solve (of individual responsibility) prominently to the fore. The majority of the exiles felt themselves under the shadow of the divine displeasure. Our fathers have sinned, and we bear the consequences, was the prevalent belief. The old theology had taught that each individual suffered for the guilt of the nation as a whole. In early times all members of a family and sometimes of a city were indiscriminately punished for a heinous crime committed by one of their number. The developing moral sense of the race had gradually modified this false dogma. In Dt. 24.16 the ancient custom of putting to death the families of a criminal is at last definitely set aside. As the exile, with its changed conditions, loomed clearly before the eyes of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, they both rejected this dogma and declared, as Ezekiel does in the present passage,

that a man is simply responsible for the consequences of his own acts. Ezekiel goes farther and asserts that it is not a man's past acts but his present attitude and deeds that determine his innocence or guilt in the eyes of God."

The Time

One day in January of the year 586 B.C. the tidings circulated through the Jewish colony at Tel-abib that "the city was smitten." The rapidity with which in the East intelligence is transmitted through secret channels has often excited the surprise of European observers. In this case there is no extraordinary rapidity to note, for the fate of Jerusalem had been decided nearly six months before it was known in Babylon. Jerusalem was taken in the fourth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah or of Ezekiel's captivity. The announcement reached Ezekiel, according to the reading of the Hebrew text, in the tenth month of the twelfth year (33.21), that is, about eighteen months after the event. It is hardly credible that the transmission of the news should have been delayed as long as this; and therefore the reading "eleventh year" found in some manuscripts and in the Syrian Version, is now generally regarded as correct. But it is remarkable that the first intimation of the siege was brought to the exiles by one of their own countrymen, who had escaped at the capture of the city. It is probable that the messenger did not start at once, but waited until he could bring some information as to how matters were settled down after the war. Or he may have been a captive who had trudged the weary road to Babylon in chains under the escort of Nebuzaradon, captain of the guard (Jer. 39.9), and afterwards succeeded in making his escape to the older settlement where Ezekiel lived.—John Skinner.

As Ezekiel had foretold (24.23), the people were pining away, stunned by the judgment that had befallen their nation for their sins.

Ezekiel's Repetitiousness

In our text we have an illustration of Ezekiel's precise and repetitious style. "His sermons lack the poetic form and the literary vigor of many of the prophets who preceded and followed him. The influence of his priestly training and point of view is discernible at every point. His sermons come from the study rather than the public forum, and reflect the leisure and spirit of meditation which distinguished the exile from the strenuous years preceding. They record, however, the work of a man who was dealing with great and vital problems and who, in his characteristic way, made a profound impression upon his own and especially succeeding generations.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Ezekiel has elaborated the doctrine of personal responsibility for salvation. No prophet so emphatically presents this thought of the responsibility of the individual. But no one can help being impressed also with Ezekiel's sense of his obligation to warn individuals of their danger. His sense of responsibility for the spiritual welfare of those whom he could influence, all conscientious teachers have. The great aim before them in teaching is so to present Christian principles of living that they shall bear fruit in the lives of their pupils.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

Beginning the Lesson

From the first Ezekiel had been conscious of a certain responsibility for the fate of each individual within reach of his words (3.16-21). This truth had been one of the keynotes of his ministry; but the practical developments which it suggested had been hindered by the opposition which he had encountered. As long as Jerusalem stood the exiles had been swayed by one common current of feeling—their thoughts were wholly occupied by the expectation of an issue that would annul the gloomy predictions of Ezekiel; and no man dared to break away from the general sentiment and range himself on the side of God's prophet. In these circumstances anything of the nature of pastoral activity was obviously out of the question. But now that this great obstacle to faith was removed, there was a prospect that the solidity of popular opinion would be broken up, so that the word of God might find an entrance here and there into susceptible hearts. The time was come to call for personal decisions, to appeal to each man to embrace for himself the offer of pardon and salvation. Out of those who act for themselves and have the courage of their

convictions, the new people of God must be formed; and the mission of the prophet is to gather round him all those who are warned by his words to "flee from the wrath to come."—John Skinner.

Ezekiel Teaches Personal Responsibility

It is generally considered that this description of the prophet's functions covers a whole department of work of which no express account is given. The inference is probably correct that a conception of the prophet's office which holds him accountable to God for the fate of individuals led to something more than mere general exhortations to repentance. The preacher must have taken a personal interest in his hearers; and must have watched for the first signs of a response to his message, and been ready to advise and encourage those who turned to him for guidance in their perplexities. And since the sphere of his influence and responsibility included the whole Hebrew community in which he lived, he must have been eager to seize every opportunity to warn individual sinners of the error of their ways, lest their blood should be required at his hand. To this intent we may say that Ezekiel held a position amongst the exiles somewhat analogous to that of a spiritual director in the Catholic Church or the pastor of a Protestant congregation. But the nurture of the spiritual life of individuals could not have presented itself to him as the chief end of his ministrations. His business was first to lay down the condition of entrance into the new kingdom of God, and then out of the ruins of old Israel to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Perhaps the nearest parallel to this department of his work which history affords is the mission of the Baptist. The keynote of Ezekiel's preaching was the same as that of John: "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." Both prophets were alike animated by a sense of crisis and urgency, based on the conviction that the impending Messianic age would be ushered in by a searching judgment in which the chaff would be separated from the wheat. Both labored for the same end—the formation of a new circle of religious fellowship, in anticipation of the Messianic Kingdom. And as John, by an inevitable spiritual selection, gathered round him a band of disciples, amongst whom our Lord found some of his most devoted followers, so we may believe that Ezekiel, by a similar process, became the acknowledged leader of those whom he taught to wait for the hope of Israel's restoration.—John Skinner, in The Expositor's Bible.

Each One of Us Shall Give Account of Himself to God

We may, and we often do, give an account of ourselves to others in which we shift all the blame for our sins upon others, but in our account to God we must bear the responsibility for our own sins. From the time that Eve blamed the serpent and Adam blamed Eve, people have been trying to make some one else bear the blame for their own deeds, seeking some scape-goat to bear their sins even as the high priest on the Day of Atonement symbolically laid the sins of the Hebrew people on the head of a goat and sent it off to perish in the wilderness. When Aaron made the golden calf he excused himself to Moses by saying that it was all the people's fault: "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on evil."

Phillips Brooks thinks that we differ, perhaps, nowhere else more than in our disposition to face the acts of our lives and to recognize our own personal part in and responsibility for the things we do. "The only hope for any of us is in a perfectly honest manliness to claim our sins. 'I did it,' let me say to all my wickedness. Let me refuse to listen for one moment to any voice which would make my sins less mine. It is the only honest and the only hopeful way, the only way to know and be ourselves. When we have done that, then we are ready for all that Christ wants to show us that we may become, and for all the powerful grace by which he wants to make us be it perfectly."

"When justice is falling," the Chinese say, "an excuse is a poor umbrella." At the last, when we give our account to God, we must admit, *Mea culpa, mea culpa,* I have sinned, I have sinned.

Every one will be judged by his own righteousness or unrighteousness. Every individual is responsible for his own sins. The Jews were in the habit of casting the blame upon their fathers; they were suffering for the sins of their fathers, they said, as in our lesson a few weeks ago. Our ancestors do make our lives harder or easier, past forces do hold us in their grip, but mightier than all inherited tendencies is our own direct, personal responsibility for our obedience or disobedience to God's laws. We cannot escape that responsibility. But—and here Ezekiel's words remind us of Christ's words—so far is God from punishing us for the sins of our fathers that he

will not even punish us for our own sins, if we repent and turn from evil and do good. And true is also the converse of this, that if we turn from righteousness to sin, our former righteousness will not atone for us.

The Most Important Thought

When Daniel Webster was Secretary of State in President Fillmore's Cabinet, he gave a dinner at the Astor House to a few of his New York friends. One of those present has narrated the following incident:

"There were twenty or so at the table. Mr. Webster seemed wearied by his journey, and speaking but little, if at all, plunged into a darksome sort of reverie, not well calculated to enliven his friends. This at length became so apparent, and the situation of all so unpleasant, that one of the company urged upon a distinguished man present, a warm friend of Mr. Webster, to get him into conversation. It was thought he only needed to be jogged to become as lively as they wished.

"This friend consented, and spoke to Mr. Webster, asking him some question that in ordinary circumstances and with ordinary men would have led to conversation, but it failed in the present case. The dark Secretary of State merely raised his head and answered simply, and crept into his cave again.

"Again the gentleman summoned courage, and said to Mr. Webster:

" 'Mr. Webster, I want you to tell me what was the most important thought that ever occupied your mind.'

"Here was a thumper for him, and so everybody thought at the table. Mr. Webster slowly passed his hand over his forehead, and in a low tone said to a friend near him:

" 'Is there any one here who does not know me?'

" 'No, sir, they all know you—are all your friends.'

"Then he looked over the table, and you may well imagine how the tones of his voice would sound upon such an occasion, giving answer to such a question. And then he said:

" 'The most important thought that ever occupied my mind was that of my individual responsibility to God.' "

For Bible Class Discussion

1. How to reprove.

2. The sins that ye do by two and two,
   Ye shall pay for one by one.—Kipling.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is the theme of the last eight chapters of Ezekiel? 2. Why was the figure of a life-giving stream especially pleasing to the people of Judah? 3. How did Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Joel represent divine blessing as water? (Isa. 12.3; 30.25; 55.1; Jer 2.13; Joel 3.18.) 4. What is the significance of the stream's flowing from the threshold of the sanctuary? 5. Describe the course of the symbolical river. 6. Describe the Dead Sea into which it flowed. 7. Compare the course of the Church with Ezekiel's river. 8. What was John's vision of the River of Life? (Rev. 22.1-5.)

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

DOES GOD TAKE NOTE OF MY LIFE?

Beginning the Lesson

One of the first things that Ezekiel had to tell the exiles in Babylon was about the coming siege of Jerusalem. The way he did it is most interesting. He took a large tile, or clay tablet, and portrayed upon it the city of Jerusalem; he sketched the temple in the center, and then the walls round about, the earth mounds, and upon them the battering rams that were hammering away at the walls, and the enemy's camps round about. Then he acted out the siege, putting an iron pan between him and the tile as a wall, and lying there many days and nights as prisoner within the walls of Jerusalem, eating each day a portion of bread carefully weighed and a measured amount of water, just as the besieged people of Jerusalem must do.

By many other object lessons Ezekiel symbolized the desolation of Jerusalem. One day he shaved off all his hair, and weighed it and divided it. One part he burned, another part he cut up with a knife, and a third part he threw away, and a very little he carefully tied up in a corner of his robe. All this indicated what would happen to the people in Jerusalem; some of them would die, some be killed, some be scattered, and only a few be cared for.

Ezekiel had also most important messages for the people who were already in exile, telling them what they themselves must do. How did he tell them what Paul told the Romans in our Golden Text, that each one must give account of himself to God?

In one of Tennyson's poems Annie urges Emmie to pray.

"'Yes, and I will,' said Emmie, 'but then, if I call to the Lord,
How should he know that it's me? Such a lot of beds in the ward!'
That was a puzzle for Annie. Again she considered and said:
'Emmie, you put our your arms, and you leave 'em outside on the bed—
The Lord has so much to see to! but, Emmie, you tell it him plain,
It's the little girl with her arms lying out on the counterpane!'"

"The Lord has so much to see to!" And there are "such a lot of beds in the ward!" Can it be that he takes note of your life and mine? Ezekiel is very emphatic in his teaching on this point. What does he declare?

Your Sins Are Yours

Have you thought in how many different senses your things are yours? Your country is yours, yet millions of people claim it is theirs. Your father and mother are yours, yet they belong as much to your brothers and sisters as to you: you can claim them all for yourselves though others share them with you.

But your sins are yours exclusively—without any subtraction, division, or partnership. Each is a solitary agent, and must bear his one burden of blame.

Your pennies in the savings bank are yours, but you can take them out, and give them away, or buy toys and sweetmeats with them. After that they are yours no longer. Your clothes are yours in a way in which your pennies are not; for they have been made for you, and for you only. But after a while your mother gives them to poor children, and then they are theirs and not yours.

Your bones are yours by closer ties than bind you to your clothes; but your bones may be taken away from you by the surgeon and you may be very glad to get rid of them. Your body is yours, but not as your soul is yours; for your body may be taken from you by death, but your soul never can. Now we come to the heart of the matter: your sins are yours more than your body is, but less than your soul is yours. Death severs forever the bonds between you and your body of flesh, but it may not sever the bonds between you and your sins. Unforgiven sin goes with the sinner into eternity: in his case death is God's arrest.

Your sins, however, are less yours than your soul is yours. While your sins are yours in this strange way, they are not your soul, they are not your very self. You have heard of One who can untie the knot. A Fiji convert offered up this beautiful prayer: "Great Spirit, untie the load of our sins. If this load was bound round our shoulders, we could untie it for ourselves; as it is bound round our hearts, we cannot untie the burden now." Christ came into the world to show us how sin and the soul might be separated.—James Wells.

Recognize Your Sins

A young girl was sweeping a room one day, when she went to the window-shade and hastily drew it down. "It makes the room so dusty," she said, "to have the sunshine coming in!" The atoms of dust which shone golden in the sunbeams were unseen in the dimmer light. The untaught girl imagined it was the sunshine which made the dust. Now, many persons imagine themselves very good people. One poor old man, who had lived all his life without a thought of love to God, said he was all ready to die. "He didn't owe any man a penny." If the Spirit of God should shine brightly into such a heart, how do you suppose it would look? It would show them sins enough to crush them! This light of the Spirit is like the sunshine in the dusty room. It reveals what was before hidden. When we begin to feel unhappy about our sins, let us never try to put away the feeling. Don't let us put down the curtain, and fancy there is no dust. It is the Holy Spirit's voice in our hearts. He is showing us ourselves; and, better still, he will show us the true way of happiness.—Unknown.

God Does Not Forget

"They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now have their own doings beset them about; they are before my face": thus the prophet Hosea represents Jehovah as speaking, and very true is his thought that God is a good Bookkeeper, that he keeps accurate credit and debit accounts. The prophet

Malachi declares that Jehovah hearkens and hears, and a Book of Remembrance is written before him for them that hear him and that think upon his name. By this figure the prophet expresses the true and comforting thought that no one who does the will of God is forgotten by him. Hosea turns the shield around and lets us see the other side: there is a Book of Remembrance for those who fear not Jehovah, that think not upon his name; he who does not the will of the Lord is not forgotten by him.

You know the words of Whittier:

We shape ourselves the joy or fear
Of which the coming life is made,
And fill our future's atmosphere
With sunshine or with shade.

The tissues of the life to be
We weave with colors all our own,
And in the field of destiny
We reap as we have sown.

How God Keeps His Book of Remembrance

When I was a boy my mother told me that God had a book in which he kept an account of all I said and did. I used to wonder how God could find time to keep an account of all boys and girls. But since I have grown older I have ceased to wonder, for I have found out where and how he keeps this book. God keeps this book in a safe inside of our heads and we are his bookkeepers. Our brains are blank tablets and our senses are pencils that write on this tablet all that we see, hear, think, say and do. By the use of memory we can turn back the pages and read all that has been written.

The Bible tells us that some day we must return this book to God who gave it and be judged according to the deeds recorded in it. Let us train our eyes to see the beautiful things, our ears to catch the good sounds, our brains to think the noble thoughts and our hands to do the kind deeds, and we shall not be ashamed to give this book to God or be afraid to be judged by the things recorded in it.—R. Albert Goodwin.

God Is Concerned in Your Use of Your Life

There is a loving God who is trying to lay his claim upon your life. How can you get an experience of God? James Gordon Gilkey answers this question. "Remember," he says, "what it is that you are looking for. The sense of God's presence is not anything strange, or dramatic, or spectacular. What you are looking for, the sense of God's presence, was beautifully described many years ago when Jesus said simply, 'I am not alone: the Father is with me.'

"If you have a feeling that you are not living your life alone, that when you come to the crossroad there is some one to whom you can turn, when you meet temptation you need not struggle, there is some one from whom you can get help; if you feel that there is some one beside yourself who is concerned in your use of your life, that is the sense of God's presence. 'I am not alone: the Father is with me!' "

Sentence Sermons

No power on earth or under the earth can make a man do wrong without his own consent.—Isaac Sharpless.

That is the bitterest of all—to wear the yoke of our own wrongdoing.—George Eliot.

"It is better to be innocent than penitent."

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. How did the vision begin, as told in Ezek. 40.1-5? 2. How is the prophet's guide described in 40.3, 4? 3. What "house" is referred to in verse 1? 4. How much is a cubit? (Dictionary.) 5. Describe the course of the river. 6. Describe the Dead Sea. 7. Why is the Dead Sea salt? 8. What did Jesus say about himself as the living water?

LESSON III—JULY 21

EZEKIEL'S VISION OF HOPE

GOLDEN TEXT: Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end. Isaiah 9.7

LESSON Ezekiel 47.1-12 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 100

EZEKIEL 47.1 And he brought me back unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward (for the forefront of the house was toward the east); and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, on the south of the altar. 2 Then he brought me out by the way of the gate northward, and led me round by the way without unto the outer gate, by the way of *the gate* that looketh toward the east; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.

3 When the man went forth eastward with the line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the ankles. 4 Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through the waters, waters that were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and caused me to pass through *the waters,* waters that were to the loins. 5 Afterward he measured a thousand; *and it was* a river that I could not pass through; for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through.

6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this?* Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the bank of the river. 7 Now when I had returned, behold, upon the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down into the Arabah; and they shall go toward the sea; into the sea *shall the waters go* which were made to issue forth; and the waters shall be healed. 9 And it shall come to pass, that every living creature which swarmeth, in every place whither the rivers come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish; for these waters are come thither, and *the waters of the sea* shall be healed, and everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE SOURCE OF THE RIVER, verses 1, 2. The prophet Ezekiel is describing his great vision. He has finished his view of the temple, its courts and its worship as they are to be in the new Jerusalem (see The Historical Background), and now his supernatural guide brings him once again to the door of the temple. There he beholds a miracle. From underneath the threshold waters issue.

The river starts from the sanctuary: from every church today influences should stream that quicken and bless the life of all around. The river sought the most direct course to the desert and the Dead Sea: the Church should carry the water of life to the waste places, the dreary, barren, thirsty places of the world. Is the life of our church limited to its own outer and inner courts?

In later times the temple area was supplied with water from an aqueduct, but at this time there may have been a spring on the temple hill which gave rise in the prophet's vision to the sight of waters issuing out from under the threshold of the temple on the right, or south side, of the entrance, and running eastward, crossing the inner court on the south of the great brazen altar there, and then out from the outer court on the south of the eastern gate. In order to follow the stream's course, Ezekiel's guide led him out through the northern gate and then around to the outer eastern gate, for the east gate of the inner court was open only on the Sabbath day and then only for the prince (46.1-8), while the east gate of the outer court was always closed, 44.1, 2. This eastern gate is the one at which all the observations in his vision begin: 40.6; 42.15; 43.1; 44.1; 46.1.

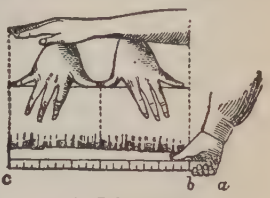
II. THE DEEPENING OF THE STREAM, verses 3-5. He follows the river with his guide, who measures with a line the distance they travel. A quarter of a mile (one thousand cubits) away from the temple, Ezekiel finds the water up to his ankles. (A cubit varied in length from eighteen to twenty-one inches.) The waters rapidly deepen as they continue their way, and when a half mile is measured the waters reach his knees; three-quarters of a mile, and it is up to his waist; and at the end of a mile the waters have become a river too deep for them to ford, deep enough to swim in.

"Ezekiel's pictures may seem to us, in part, mechanical and fantastic, if not grotesque; but it is not difficult for a sympathetic imagination to appreciate the thing

Ezekiel would be at, or to share his hopeful and eager wonder at the possibilities of the future time when the Church has secured her true place in the land and in the hearts of the people."

"Too often the life of the Church is enclosed within the four walls of the outer court, and not the eastern gate alone, but all the gates are closed, so that those without cannot pass within and those within cannot pass without. No stream of life has gone forth from it to bless the surrounding world. The waste places have remained waste, even those that were only a thousand cubits from the door; and the Dead Sea, only a few miles off, has remained dead. In that case must we not say that the Church herself is dead? If the water will not run, if the stream will not flow, it is stagnant" (J. E. McFadyen).

III. THE STREAM LIFE-GIVING, verses 6-9. "Son of man, hast thou seen this?" the guide questions, then brings him to the river's bank. He finds that the barren banks have been transformed by the waters, there are trees growing along both sides of the stream. The river shall flow down the wilderness of Judah even to the Dead Sea, his guide tells him, and what is more marvelous still, everything shall live wherever the river comes. It shall purify even the Dead Sea, sweetening its bitter waters so that it will support life: it will swarm with fishes so that from Engedi to Eneglaim fishermen will spread their nets and catch them.



A Cubit Rule

"While the whole land of Israel is to be renewed and made to minister to the good of man in fellowship with God, the main stream of fertility is expended in the apparently hopeless task of reclaiming the Judean desert and purifying the Dead Sea. It is an emblem of the earthly ministry of him who made himself the Friend of publicans and sinners, and lavished the resources of his grace and wealth of his affection on those who were deemed beyond ordinary possibility of salvation. It is to be feared, however, that the practice of most churches has been too much the reverse of this. They have been tempted to confine the water of life within fairly respectable channels, amongst the prosperous and contented, where the advantages of religion are most likely to be appreciated" (John Skinner).

The marshes around the Dead Sea, however, shall not be sweetened, for they shall still supply the needed salt. Every tree that produces fruit shall thrive on the river banks; its leaves shall not wither nor its fruits fail; it shall renew itself every month, because the waters, which are its life, come from the sanctuary; its fruit shall furnish food, and its leaves have a healing virtue.

"The background of this vision is a sick and hungry world. This is incidentally suggested by the very last words of the description, where the fruit of the beautiful trees upon its banks is to be for food, and their leaves for healing. Food for the famished and healing for the sick souls of men! These things the Church must be able to provide, or she is no church. The trees with their wholesome fruit and health-giving leaves, are nourished by the waters of the river, and the river has its source in the house of God. Everything shall live whithersoever the river of her life cometh. If this is not literally true, it is ideally true. She has food and healing to offer all who are willing to be fed and healed by her. She can express her life in an infinite variety of ways, and she has an inexhaustible power of adapting herself to the various needs of men. Not once, but twelve times a year, do her trees yield their fruit" (J. E. McFadyen).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Behold, waters, verse 1. Ezekiel's figure of the Life-giving Stream meant more to the people who had lived in Jerusalem than we easily realize. Judah abounds in deserts, the sun shines upon it with tropical fervor, the breezes that come from the east are like blasts from a furnace, the city is perched on a barren rock, and water to its inhabitants has always been a luxury. How often the people whom Ezekiel

addressed must have wished that a living stream poured down the dry bed of the intermittent Kidron!

In his book on Jerusalem, Dr. George Adam Smith says of the city's water supply: "What thrift and storage of scanty supplies! The dykes of Holland, piled to keep the water out, tell no more eloquent tale of the labor of centuries, the piety and resolution of many generations, than does the story of what Jerusalem has done to keep the waters in—the rock cisterns of her early days; the desperate care to bring the springs within the walls out of reach of besiegers; the execution of tunnels and pools by men hardly apprenticed to the art of engineering; the struggle to keep pace with the rise of the city's level above the sunken sources of the past; and, finally, the long aqueducts and deep reservoirs of more numerous, and civilized generations.

"When all these labors, before the last Herod's aqueduct, resulted in such moderate achievements, when the reservoirs and springs were liable to be exhausted by the failure of the rains, and the parched gardens scarcely relieved the barrenness of the landscape, do we wonder, that as the mirage of the desert appears to the parched traveler like pools and lakes, so the hopes of this thirsty people assumed the form of streams and rivers about their Holy City? It is only a study of the conditions that can furnish us with full sympathy for the words of the prophet Ezekiel about the Life-giving Stream.

Everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh, verse 9. The temple stream is a symbol of the miraculous transformation which the land of Canaan is to undergo in order to fit it for the habitation of Jehovah's ransomed people. Anticipations of a renewal of the face of nature are a common feature of Messianic prophecy. They have their roots in the religious interpretation of the possession of the land as the chief token of the divine blessing on the nation. In the vicissitudes of agricultural or pastoral life the Israelites read the reflection of Jehovah's attitude towards himself and his people: fertile seasons and luxurious harvests were the sign of his favor; drought and famine were the proof that he was offended. Even at the best of times, however, the condition of Palestine left much to be desired from the husbandman's point of view, especially in the Kingdom of Judah. Nature was often stern and unpropitious, the cultivation of the soil was always attended with hardship and uncertainty, large tracts of the country were given over to irreclaimable barrenness. There was always a vision of better things possible, and in the last days the prophets cherished the expectation that the vision would be realized. When all causes of offence are removed from Israel and Jehovah smiles on his people, the land will blossom into supernatural fertility, the plowman overtaking the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth the seed, the mountains dripping sweet wine and the hills melting (Amos 9.13). Such ideal pictures of universal plenty and comfort abound in the writings of the prophets, and are not wanting in the Book of Ezekiel.

The river of life is the most striking presentation of this general conception of Messianic felicity. It is one of those vivid images from Eastern life which through the Apocalypse has passed into the symbolism of Christian eschatology, Rev. 22.1, 2. So writes the seer of Patmos, in words whose music charms the ear even of those to whom running water means much less than it did to a native of Jewish Palestine. But John had read of the mystic river in the pages of his favorite prophet before he saw it in a vision. The clear resemblance between the two pictures leaves no doubt that the origin of the conception is to be found in Ezekiel's vision. The underlying truth is the same in both representations, that the presence of God is the source from which the influences flow forth that renew and purify human existence.—John Skinner, in The Expositor's Bible.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Last Eight Chapters of the Book of Ezekiel

It is now 572 B.C., the twenty-fifth year since Ezekiel was taken to Babylon with the first group of exiles from Judah, and fourteen years after the fall of Jerusalem and the second captivity. The last eight chapters of the Book of Ezekiel record the addresses of the prophet by which he kept before the thought of the people their beloved land and city and aroused in them a hope of return. In vision he is transported to Palestine; he describes the perfect temple of the New Jerusalem, God's return to it, and the people's perfect service therein. The effect of this perfect service will be that God's blessing shall flow forth as a magic river, so that the

whole land will be transformed into beauty and fruitfulness. This result he tells in the beautiful symbolic vision which we call "The Vision of the Waters."

"The whole passage (the last eight chapters) exhibit the prophetic imagination in one of its most daring and splendid flights," Prof. John E. McFadyen well says. "Ezekiel and his people are still in the land of exile—they are doomed to remain there for at least thirty years, and, so far as human eye could see, forever. But, so sure is the prophet that Jehovah will bring his people back to their own land, that he actually draws up a minute and elaborate program for the reorganization of the Church on their return. Even in the Bible, with its hope invincible flashing from every page, there is nothing more sublime than this—that, by the waters of Babylon, where the natural hopes seemed forever extinguished and there was nothing left for the exiles but to hang up their harps upon the willow trees and weep as they thought of their beloved Jerusalem, which they were never likely to see again—there is nothing more sublime than this, that a prophet could not only see beyond the immediate sorrow, in some vague way, to a brighter day, but that he saw it all so clearly and confidently that he prepares and minutely plans for it."

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Course of the Symbolic River

From the temple it ran through the Kidron into the Dead Sea. The Kidron begins north of Jerusalem, turns around between the temple mount and the Mount of Olives, and then plunges down the alkali waste of barren precipices of the wilderness of Judea. "So barren and blistered, so furnace-like does it become as it drops below the level of the sea, that it takes the name of Wadyenhar, or the Fire Wady. At last its dreary course brings it to the precipices above the Dead Sea, into which it shoots its scanty winter waters; but all summer it is dry."

The Dead Sea

The Dead Sea, then called the Salt Sea, lies thirteen hundred feet below the sea level, its shores wholly barren of vegetation, with here and there deposits of sulphur, bitumen, and tall figures of salt. Near the center of the western shore is Engedi. The name, which means Fountain of the Kid, was given to it because "several hundred feet up the mountain, the little silver thread of a spring bounds and skips, kid-like, from rock to rock." The site of Eneglaim is unknown, but is supposed to have been toward the mouth of the Jordan.

The Tomb of Ezekiel

As we part with Ezekiel in this lesson let us turn from his Wonderful River to the Hindich Canal a few hours southeast of Babylon, where there is a little Jewish village known as Kifil, the Arabic corruption of the name Ezekiel, and there visit the tomb which tradition says is that of the prophet. To this spot annually have come for centuries the descendants of the exiles of Jerusalem who still dwell in the land of their captivity. The tomb as described by Dr. Edgar James Banks is a large, square, brick structure, enclosing an open court, and surmounted by a pinnacle-shaped dome, similar to other tombs of Arab construction. Within, beneath the dome, is the grave, in a large chamber whose walls are richly decorated with bright-colored Hebrew inscriptions. The building itself, constantly renewed by the devout worshipers, appears to have come from the prosperous days of the Arabs, but it probably originated with the death of Ezekiel, for of all the tombs of the prophets none seems more authentic. Here, probably, Ezekiel lived; here the exiled Jews gathered to listen to his teachings and to hear the visions which all of the Christian world are still reading; here they received encouragement from his prophecies of a return from exile.

Tomb of Ezekiel

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Teachers of Intermediates may lead them to describe the Nile River and tell what it does for Egypt, and then by way of contrast may describe to them the River Kidron, a dry wady, or river bed, most of the year, and the Jordan, the only real river in Palestine, flowing through its deep trench 2500 feet below Jerusalem and therefore of no service to the plateau of Judea. Dr. George Adam Smith, in Light from Oriental Life, and F. W. Boreham, in our first selection under Topic II, make the water situation of Palestine very clear. Then let your pupils tell you how Ezekiel saw the land wholly changed by a wonderful river, and draw the lesson of the beautiful parable: what water is to our bodies and all growing things, that God's Spirit is to our Soul and its growth.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE CURE FOR THE WORLD'S ILLS

Beginning the Lesson

Do you know John Oxenham's beautiful stanzas entitled The Sacrament of Water?

Crystal clear from the throne of God
Flows The River, The Shining River,
For ever full, for ever free,
It floweth everlastingly
Through the banks of Time to the Boundless Sea
Of Love indwelling Eternity.

God's sweet grace is running water,
All fair sparkling, running water,—
Bubbling spring from rock or sod,
Goodly thing,—the gift of God!—
Babbling praises as it flows,
Gathering graces as it grows,
Scattering joys where'er it goes;—
Praise to God in running water!

Blithely o'er its shallows purling,
Lithely through its narrows swirling.
Round its mossy boulders curling,
Glooming, gleaming, spooming, creaming,
With new life so richly teeming
For the thirsty earth's redeeming;
Give God praise for running water,
For all fair, fresh, running water!

The poet has caught something of another poet's love for water that is "with new life so richly teeming for the thirsty earth's redeeming." It may seem strange to you to hear the prophet Ezekiel termed a poet, but an eminent scholar declares that the man who drew for us the immortal pictures of the valley of dry bones and of the river of life that proceeded from the temple of God, must rank as one of the poets of the world.

What preceded Ezekiel's "Vision of Hope"? (Continue with The Historical Background and Explanations and Comments.)

The Influences Which Alone Can Purify the World

The thought of Israel anticipated the time when the Messiah would send forth a tide of living influence through the nations, cleansing their corruptions, and making everything in human life and society to realize its ideal. The seer of Patmos gives the final significance of Ezekiel's vision. Under the vivifying influence of the Gospel of Christ the most hopeless lands and classes revive, and the blasted regions of wickedness become as the Garden of the Lord. The influences which alone can purify the world are spiritual and flow from God in Christ.

A modern traveler through the wild wastes of country beyond Tripoli reports that in the deserts he came upon extensive patches of brilliantly colored flowers; although growing in the dried-up torrent-beds of a land from which the scorching sky had licked up every atom of moisture, the flowers were apparently in vivid and mysterious bloom. Upon nearer approach the traveler found the unique phenomenon explained. The flowers had actually mummified in the drought and heat, and, with

their natural tints preserved, were permanent as though cut in paper. Thus the literature of classic lands surprises us with patches of brilliantly colored moral teaching in apparently living bloom; but close examination shows its artificiality—it was little more than speculative, academic, traditional; and although it exhibited the natural expression and tints of the virtues, it had, like the petrified flowers of the desert, no vitality. What a mighty change followed the coming of our Lord! Everything shall live whither the river cometh. Revealing the holy God, the eternal universe, the spirituality of the human nature, and pouring forth on humanity the Holy Spirit, our Lord put a soul into morality: he gave it a sound root, planted it in a vital soil, and henceforth the righteousness of a man was superseded by the righteousness of God.—Condensed from a chapter in The Supreme Conquest, by W. L. Watkinson.

The Religion Which Works

Sooner or later the world comes back from false religions to one which works. Human nature loves to experiment, and every new fashion, even in religions, gets tried. But the deep heart of man in the time of stress and strain, when the rivers are tested, wants a religion that works. A thousand forms of religion have died out of memory and are as weak today as the beams of Noah's Ark. But the great life-currents of Christ's religion flow on for the healing both of men and of nations. It still works. It works wherever it is fairly tried. Darwin was amazed when he saw what Christianity was doing for the Tahiti savages. He wrote: "The lesson of the missionaries is the enchanter's wand; the march of improvement consequent on the introduction of Christianity in the South Seas probably stands by itself in the records of history." No; it does not stand alone. The similar record comes from all peoples where the same gospel is tried. It has the same power today, whether it is tried in Palestine, in New York slums, or in the home of the city millionaire. Wherever it gets a chance, it works. The truth is as new today and as old as the Apostle James' that a faith that does not work is dead. There is little hope for a religion of which it cannot be said, it worketh.—Rufus M. Jones, in Practical Christianity.

The Master Force

With the spiritual faith of the Lord Jesus we need not despair of the most sunken and desolate victims and areas of immorality. The river of vision makes even the Dead Sea to teem with life. The unsympathetic critics argue, "Some are born cripples, others idiots, whilst a third class is constitutionally incurably vicious, and there is nothing for the unfortunate class except exclusion or extinction." The Church of Christ will be the last to accept this reasoning. The most striking feature of our day is its glorious humanity. We do not despair of the worst of cripples, and even for the idiot we build asylums where love and science combine to repair the ruin of the brain and woo reason back to her throne. We refuse to abandon the most forlorn; with the courage of despair, the fanaticism of hope, we seek to save that which is lost. If we act thus in the physical and mental realm, shall we be less devoted and enthusiastic in the moral world? Surely this is the special sphere of our power and glory.

Spencer Stanhope's great picture in the Manchester Art Gallery represents the river of Lethe. On the one side of the river miserable, distorted, ghastly, withered carcasses drop into the flood, whilst on the opposite bank they emerge in sunshine and summer, young and beautiful, with music and song, walking in glory. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh." In this river that Ezekiel and John saw, the painter's fancy becomes glorious fact; the morally diseased, paralyzed, loathsome, perishing, sinking into the crystal tide, suffer the most delightful of all changes, and henceforth walk in newness of life.—W. L. Watkinson, in The Supreme Conquest.

The Cure for the World's Ills

The Word of God is a message of Truth;
O River from out the Throne,—
Where'er thou comest, to age or to youth,
There Life is, and Life alone;
How tender the power o'er the broken heart;
How healing the penitent tears that start,
Assuaging the pain of many a smart,
And bringing the dew of peace.—J. Stuart Bogg.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The waters of the Dead Sea shall be healed. So there is nothing—nothing too sunken, too useless, too doomed—but by the grace of God it may be redeemed, lifted and made rich with life.—George Adam Smith.

2. God doeth well for us in giving the grace of comfort; but man doeth evil in not returning all again unto God with thanksgiving.—Thomas à Kempis.

Question for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is the probable date of the Book of Daniel? 2. What is the character of each of the two parts of the Book of Daniel? 3. For what purpose was the book probably written? 4. How did Daniel prove loyal to his religious convictions? 5. How do orthodox Jews today maintain their principles in regard to food? 6. How are dreams regarded in the Orient? 7. What were probably the four kingdoms typified by the metals gold, silver, brass and iron? 8. What was Jesus' ideal of the Kingdom of God? 9. Compare Daniel and Joseph.

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

THE WONDERFUL RIVER

Beginning the Lesson

The Jews never forgave the frowning Providence that denied to their fair city of Jerusalem a river. They knew how Babylon stood proudly surveying the shining waters of the Euphrates, how Nineveh was beautified by the lordly Tigris, how Thebes glittered in stately grandeur on the Nile, and how Rome sat in state beside the Tiber, and they were consumed with envy because no broad river protected them from their foes and bore to their gates the wealthy merchandise of many lands. The prophets were forever dreaming of the river; the psalmists were forever singing of the river. Nothing delighted the people like a vision such as visited Ezekiel, of a broad river rushing out from Jerusalem. No greater or more glowing message ever reached the disconsolate and riverless people than when Isaiah proclaimed, "The glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby!" Jehovah, that is to say, shall impart to Jerusalem all the advantages of the river without any of its attendant dangers. Many a faithless river, by bearing the destroyer on its bosom to the city gates, had proved the undoing of the people after all. But no such fate shall overwhelm Jerusalem. And hearing this, the riverless city was comforted.—F. W. Boreham, in Faces in the Fire.

Who will describe the river which Ezekiel saw in his vision?

The Beautiful Figure of the Wonderful River

In Boston there is a statue of one of America's greatest preachers, Phillips Brooks, made by a great American sculptor, Saint Gaudens. The figure is of heroic size, and behind and above it stands the figure of Christ, his hands resting on the great preacher's shoulder. Do you not see what it means? By those two figures in marble the sculptor portrays the thought that Phillips Brooks' power came from Christ; Christ inspired him, as we say. So by his figure in words of The Wonderful River, the prophet Ezekiel represents the thought of the source of all power and blessing.

The River of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

The whole vision, though bearing other meanings, may be applied to the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It began at Jerusalem as a tiny rivulet. By our Savior's preaching his disciples—some of whom became apostles—were converted. These were the means of the conversion of a still larger number. But at the first, the stream was very shallow, for the whole Church could meet in one upper room. Even after the Pentecostal increase it was but a brooklet. Herod thought that he could leap across it or could dam it up, but his persecution swelled the stream. Very shortly after, the watercourse grew broader and deeper, till it attracted the attention of the Roman Emperors and excited their alarm. They thought it was time to drain the rivulet lest it should become a torrent so great as to sweep them away. Their attempts to stay its course only added to its floods. Its current became more strong and wide than before; and on it went from age to age, till at last it had become a mighty river watering the whole earth and greatly blessing the nations. It is destined yet to grow until it shall be like the main ocean itself, for "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." We bless

God that the day of small things which dawned at Bethlehem has already grown to a day of great things; and our faith fully expects to see greater things than these.—Charles Spurgeon.

The Bible a Reservoir of the River of Life

I think the Bible is not so much a river as a reservoir, out of which streams are perpetually flowing in all kinds of different directions.

There was once a town lying at the foot of a mountain and getting all its water supply from a great reservoir at the mountain top. The water was conveyed down by a channel or pipe. All at once the supply failed; they waited, but still no water came. At last, because no place can exist without water, the town began to be deserted—until was seen scrawled, on one of the buildings, "If you want to know why the water has failed, dig below." So they dug, and they found that, out of sight, just under the surface of the ground, something had clogged the pipe. There was the beautiful sparkling water up above, and there was the thirsty town below, but there was something in the way—the water could not get through.

The Bible is a great reservoir, full of the Water of Life, and conveying it in beautiful, helpful streams to you and me. But sometimes we find the Bible does not help us. Why? It is not the fault of the Bible; it is the fault of ourselves. Something has got in the way. Sometimes it is a bit of laziness; we got up too late to find time to read our Bibles. Sometimes it is a bit of carelessness. Very often it is a bit of irreverence that has got in the way and we have not read our Bibles in the right spirit.—The Bishop of Kensington, in an Address.

Take the Water of Life Freely

She had been in the habit of reading a chapter in her Bible night and morning, but there was so little time now that by degrees the chapter dwindled to a verse, and was finally forgotten altogether. She had been used to stop in her work several times a day; to be silent for a moment while she lifted her soul to Heaven and strengthened it with a thought of Christ's nearness to her and his infinite love. But she gave up now these hurried draughts of the water of life, and her thirsty soul grew weaker and more silent within her. The world outside was noisy enough in its demands. It seemed to her that her duties were never performed, work hard as she would. The life died out of her efforts, too, though she could not have told the reason why it was so.

In the garden outside her window, there stood a tall young sapling, which for several years had thrown out its strong green branches and yielded both shade and fruit. Sarah observed one day that it was beginning to wither. The leaves faded and dropped off; then the branches shriveled and grew brittle. In a month or two the bark upon the tree began to shrink and crack.

"The tree is dead," said her father. "It will be of no more use."

"I could train vines upon it," she suggested.

"No. The tap root has been cut. It is dead." He looked at her gravely a moment, and then continued: "When a human being, like a tree, ceases to draw life unto himself, he can be of no support to others. He may make a fair show and still stand erect among men. But he is dead; he is of no use in the world."

Sarah went silently to her own chamber, and kneeling, cried to God. "Is it too late?" she asked. "Is it too late?"—The Youth's Companion.

Sentence Sermons

The human spirit without the indwelling Christ is but a river-bed without water.—C. C. Hall.

The river flows, but it is the man who rests on the Word of God who shall find it flowing for him.—C. C. Hall.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Is Daniel the author or the hero of the Book that bears his name? 2. Why were Daniel and his companions in Babylon? 3. What kind of courage did Daniel show in chapter 1? 4. In chapter 2? 5. Tell Nebuchadnezzar's dream. 6. What was the lesson of that dream? 7. How did Daniel show his modesty? 8. How did he show tact? 9. How did he win out? 10. What is the penalty of lowering one's standards of right and wrong?

LESSON IV—JULY 28

THE STORY OF DANIEL

GOLDEN TEXT: They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Daniel 12.3

LESSON Daniel 1.1-21; 2.13-19; 4.19; 7.28; 8.15-18; 9.20-23; 10.1-19; 12.9

DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 46

DANIEL 1.1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God; and he carried them into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god. 3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring in *certain* of the children of Israel, even of the seed royal and of the nobles; 4 youths in whom was no blemish, but well-favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and endued with knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability to stand in the king's palace; and that he should teach them the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm.

2.17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18 that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his companions should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. 21 And he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings; he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that have understanding; 22 he revealeth the deep and secret things; he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. 23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast now made known unto me what we desired of thee; for thou hast made known unto us the king's matter. 24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and said thus unto him: Destroy not the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE FIRST CAPTIVES TAKEN TO BABYLON, 1.1, 2. It was in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, 606 B.C., that Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, first besieged Jerusalem and carried back with him to the land of Shinar (the old name of Babylon: Gen. 10.10), Jewish captives, together with some of the treasures of the temple which he then had placed in the treasure-house of his god Marduk. Among the captives were Daniel and three other youths of our lesson. Daniel belonged to a family of high rank in Jerusalem, and, according to Jerome, was at this time only a boy.

II. THE TRAINING OF DANIEL AND HIS COMPANIONS IN BABYLON, verses 3-7. Nebuchadnezzar directed Ashpenaz, the master of his convicts, to take the Jewish youths of noble birth who were especially fair and bright and wise and were therefore potential candidates for official positions, and teach them the language and wisdom of the Chaldeans. The king also directed that the youths were to be nourished with a portion of the food and wine which were prepared for himself. After three years they were to become his attendants.

Among the youths selected were Daniel and three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Daniel's name meant "God is Judge"; Hananiah's, "Jehovah is gracious"; Mishael's, "Who is what God is?" and Azariah's, "Jehovah has helped." Ashpenaz called them instead Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, giving them names which, it is thought, had reference to Babylonian deities.

III. THE HEBREW YOUTHS REMAIN TRUE TO THEIR PRINCIPLES, 1.8-16. Daniel firmly resolved (purposed in his heart) that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties nor with the king's wine. They faced the same problem as regards food and wine that the Gentile churches which Paul founded did, for the food might have been first offered in sacrifice to idols, or it might not have been

prepared according to Jewish laws, or it might be the flesh of animals held by the Jews to be unclean. In the second book of Maccabees, we are told that on the king's birthday Jews were "constrained by bitter constraint to eat of the sacrifices," and that one of the scribes, Eleazar by name, chose rather to be tortured to death, leaving his death for an example of noble courage and a memorial of value, not only unto young men but with all the nation. In the same book we are told of seven famous brothers and their mother who preferred death to eating swine's flesh.

"Preserve your Christian uniqueness; let not tolerance dull your Christian distinctiveness."

Daniel believed it a sacred duty to keep the law recorded in Dt. 12.23, 24; Lev. 11.4-20, and for him, therefore, not to have kept it would have been a sin. "It is evil for that man who eateth with offense," said Paul. The principle at stake, too, was greater than that of keeping one law alone. The king had changed not only Daniel's food, but his dress, his studies, his very name. Everything possible was done to make Daniel and his companions forget their nationality and their religion. To yield in the matter of eating meat sacrificed to idols, would have been to renounce Jehovah their God for the false gods of Babylon. Contrast with Daniel's conduct that of Cardinal Wolsey, who when cast aside by Henry VIII realized, as Shakespeare makes him say:

"Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, he would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies."

"Whatever people may think of you, do what you think to be right" (Pythagoras).

"Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things—in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself" (Susannah Wesley).

For himself and three companions Daniel requested Ashpenaz, the officer in charge, to allow them to refuse the food given. The latter, though kindly disposed toward Daniel, did not grant his request. "Why should the king compare your faces with those of the other youths and notice in yours the effect of lack of proper nourishment?" he returned. "The king might think that I had enriched myself with what had been supplied for you, and my life would be forfeited."

Daniel, however, had a plan which he knew would get no one into trouble. He turned to the steward, the subordinate official appointed over the youths, and asked him to make a test. "For a number of days let us eat vegetable food (probably beans, peas and lentils) and drink water, and then compare our faces with those of the youths who eat the king's dainties."

"We are always being tested in just such practical ways. The world is always asking Christian people to pass examinations. Does our faith make us healthier in body, more vigorous in business, pleasanter people to see and to do with? According to the answer to these questions, the world is impressed favorably or unfavorably" (R. C. Gillie).

The steward yielded to Daniel's request, doubtless with many misgivings. At the end of the time suggested by Daniel, the experiment had succeeded—the steward found the four youths heavier and fairer than those who ate the king's food.

"That was to be expected, though the steward was surprised. Quite apart from the facts of hygiene, a good conscience and a contented mind promote digestion. It is not so much the amount you eat as the way you digest it that makes your food do you good. Daniel was on sound lines from the point of view of both morals and hygiene. How we should like to have been present at the 'sports day' that tested the four! High jump, mile race, endurance test, weight test, sight, hearing, coördination, nerve tests—what was the use of the other youths competing?"—Emily Huntley.

So successful was the experiment that Daniel and his friends were put permanently upon their simple diet.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (Paul).

IV. THE RESULT OF PLAIN LIVING AND HIGH THINKING, verses 17-20. God gave the four youths knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: they were industrious students, but the gift came none the less from God, as do all good things. Theirs was the *mens sana in corpore sano,* the sound mind in the sound body, for simple living always results in clear thinking. And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams: see Chapter II. When the time came for all the youths to be summoned to the king's presence, he found these four Hebrew youths the first of them all; in every matter of wisdom and understanding upon which he tested them all, he found these four ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters of his realm, and they were therefore given positions which involved personal attendance upon him.

"When they stood in front of him, clean, straight, strong, unsullied, undaunted, unafraid, men who had their principles, and who had shown that they were willing to live and to die for them, he said at once, 'These are my men for whom I have been waiting.' Their fidelity brought them power, popularity, success. It brings that to most men like them, and it is what the world seeks" (Robert E. Speer).

V. THE DURATION OF DANIEL'S LIFE, verse 21. Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., some sixty-six years after the third year of Jehoiakim, verse one. The expression, Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus, means that Daniel lived throughout the duration of the Chaldean Empire. According to Dan. 10.1 he was still living in the third year of Cyrus.

" 'Whom the gods love, dies young,' wrote Alexander, expressing in a line the ancient Greek idea of a sinful world and the best way out of it. But the life of Daniel shows that a man may mix in politics, and occupy a high position, and yet be greatly beloved of God and man, and be kept unspotted from the world, even to extreme old age. It is more true to say, 'Whom God loves, lives long,' yea, lives for ever and ever" (F. W. Ainley).

VI. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S FORGOTTEN DREAM AND HIS THREAT TO THE MAGICIANS, 2.1-12. In Old Testament times great importance was attached to dreams, for they were regarded as prophetic of coming events. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, dreamed a dream which he could not recall on awakening, and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep went from him. "His state of mind awakening is a psychological condition with which we are all familiar. We awake in a tremor. We have seen something which disquieted us, but we cannot recall what it was; we have had a frightful dream, but we can only remember the terrifying impression which it has left upon our minds" (F. W. Farrar).

The king summoned the "wise men" of his realm and demanded that they tell him both his dream and its interpretation. They declared his demand an impossible one: if he would tell the dream, they would interpret it. The unreasonable king became furious, declared them impostors, and ordered all the wise men slain. All this was quite in keeping with the character of a despotic monarch who would brook no opposition to his will, and who held human life very cheap. "Whom he would, he slew," for his power was absolute.

VII. DANIEL'S DREAM-VISION, 2.13-23. Among the wise men of the realm whom Arioch, the king's captain, sought in order to carry out the king's decree, were Daniel and his three companions. Daniel obtained a brief respite. He bade his companions join him in prayer to God, that he would make known to them the dream and thus spare their lives and that of the others. Then Daniel trustfully lay down to sleep, and in a night vision his prayer was answered, and he gave praise and thanks to God. Then he went to Arioch and said, "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation."

VIII. DANIEL MAKES KNOWN THE KING'S DREAM, 2.24-35. "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, soothsayers could tell the king his dream," said Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar when brought into his presence. By that dream "God had made known to the king what shall be in the latter day." And Daniel carefully disclaimed all wisdom on his own part and gave all the glory to God. "This secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living," he declared.

Said a prominent editor: "A writer is only God's stenographer. Where do his thoughts come from? He does not know. They come; one day they don't come. The glory is departed. God has discharged him without previous notice and hired another man."

It was a huge, terrible colossus that the king had seen in his dream, Daniel told him: its head was of gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its feet of iron and clay. Then he had seen a stone, not hewn by human hands, smite the feet of the image and break them to pieces. The image had then fallen, its shattered ruins becoming like chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away; but the stone became a mountain and filled the whole earth.

IX. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM, 2.36-45. "Thou, O King," said Daniel, "the king of kings, the ruler over the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens and the children of men, art the head of gold." Three inferior kingdoms should follow the Babylonian Empire, represented by the inferior metals silver, brass and iron. The second empire is usually considered the Median, the third the Persian, and the fourth the Græco-Macedonian. "The second is either the Median rule of Darius, which the writer of Daniel mistakenly supposed to come before that of Cyrus the Persian (8.20), or the kingdom of Belshazzar, who is contrasted with Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 5: the third is either the Persian empire, beginning with Cyrus, or the Medo-Persian empire, which is represented by a single animal (the ram) in chapter 8" (One Volume Commentary). The fourth kingdom, that of the Greek empire which was founded by the conquests of Alexander the Great, was fittingly described as of iron that breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things. The feet and toes, partly of clay and partly of iron, represent Alexander's empire as broken up after his death: "there were elements both of strength and weakness in the rival kingdoms of the Seleucidæ and Ptolemies." "They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men refers to royal marriages by which these kingdoms sought to establish alliance" (One Volume Commentary). The mysterious rock-fragment, the stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands which broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold, represents the Messianic Kingdom, a kingdom which shall supersede all kingdoms and shall stand for ever. This is the first announcement of a kingdom; and its sovereignty shall not be left to another people, Daniel further adds. "The Messianic Kingdom will be in the hands not of foreigners, but of Jews. Both the national limitation and the foreshortening of view in this verse are characteristic of Old Testament prophecy, and do not affect the value of the central truth which is taught" (One Volume Commentary).

And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, it shall stand for ever. "The religion of the Old Testament is pre-eminently a religion of the forward look, of hope, of faith. The prophets, who were the most competent interpreters of that religion, were inspired in all their teaching and activity by a sublime optimism. However dark and discouraging the present might be, the prophets were firmly convinced that ultimately God and his cause would triumph. This prophetic hope concerning the future was gathered up in the confident assertion that the Kingdom of God would be established upon earth. In other words, the prophets were anticipating a state of society in which complete harmony would exist between God and man, so that the divine purpose for man could come to a glorious realization. The only reason why this fundamental hope was expressed in terms of the kingdom was that in the days of the prophets the best known form of national government was the monarchy" (F. C. Eiselen).

"In the Book of Daniel we follow a brave mind which has climbed high and attempts to share with us a wide and expansive view of the meaning of history. We may become confused in the midst of the figures of the Book. We need not lose our way as that book guides us into the presence of the God who can be contented with nothing less than the triumph of his righteous will in the national and international relations of men.

"Hegel's Philosophy of History is a conspicuous attempt to obtain a world view of the past. Augustine's City of God is a notable expression of the same sort of ambition. The Book of Daniel has the same sort of mind blowing through it. You climb to the top of the highest available mountain and you

cast your eyes afar. You see kingdoms come. You see kingdoms go. And through it all you see the working out of the great and powerful will of the Master of Life. The author of the Book of Daniel was sure that God was at work in the world. And he was sure that the consummation of history was God's visible and complete triumph. He believed that God is the ultimate fact to which all other facts must at last conform.

"This belief in God at work in the world is one of those creative conceptions which enrich and transform the life of men and nations. And the belief in God triumphant in history has the very genius of achieving optimism in it" (Lynn H. Hough).

X. DANIEL'S PROMOTION, 2.46-48. "The Great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure," said Daniel in conclusion. Nebuchadnezzar recognized the truth of these words, fell down and did obeisance to Daniel, acknowledged also by his words the greatness of the true God, and rewarded Daniel by making him governor of the province of Babylon and the chief of the wise men.

"The issue is not reached yet, but the dream is certain. The kingdom is concentrated in its King, and the life of Jesus, diffused through his servants, works to the increase of the empire, and will not cease till the kingdoms of this world are the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ" (Alexander Maclaren).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

The king's dainties, 1.8. Athenæus, who lived about 200 A.D., calls the animals that were served at the tables of the Persian kings victims, because they were first offered as victims to their gods, and further says that the Persian kings (the Persian Empire succeeded the Babylonian) were accustomed to order the food left at their own tables delivered to their courtiers.

Canon Tristram quotes from an old Latin book by a Dutch traveler this description of a dinner of the Shah of Persia two hundred and fifty years ago:

Clay Model of a Sheep's Liver, Inscribed with Omens and Magical Formulæ Used in Divination

There were neither chairs nor tables, and the guests sat in semicircles, so that all should face the sovereign. The first semicircle comprised only the highest dignitaries and foreign ministers. The Shah's courtiers occupied the second rank, and so on, till the hindmost places were filled by the youths in training for the public service. The dishes were brought in, and after the sovereign was served, they were passed on through the long rows until six hundred attendants had feasted, all sitting on the carpets, and at each fresh dish they prostrated themselves before their lord. No one about the court was allowed to buy any food, or eat anything but what came from the Shah's stores, as to do so would be to signify that his hospitality was scanty.

We can easily see that if the arrangements at the court of Nebuchadnezzar were like the later Persian fashion, to eat the food offered publicly to an idol and then passed on, would have been a direct act of idol homage.

The magicians and enchanters in his realm, 1.20. Babylon was the land of magic; and a very extensive literature, dealing with different branches of the subject, has been brought to light during recent years. Demons, or evil spirits, were supposed to be active upon earth, bringing to mankind diseases, misfortunes and every kind of ill; the heavens were supposed to exercise an influence over the destinies of men and nations. Methods had to be devised for the purpose of dealing with the occult agencies concerned, of interpreting all significant phenomena, and of averting, where this was held to be possible, the evils which they portended. Sorcerers and sorceresses sprang up, who, by means of various magical devices, could invoke the demons at their will, and bring such persons as they chose within their power.—S. R. Driver, in The Book of Daniel.

The king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon, 2.12. Recent excavations at Ur of the Chaldees have brought to light an inscribed cylinder on which Nebuchadnezzar is described as "the great one, the majestic one, the governor without faults," and in a prayer to some god of the land occur these words: "Confound the rebels, break their arms, destroy the enemy courtiers—annihilate them."

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Witnessing for God in the Land of the Exile

Professor Richard G. Moulton fittingly says: "The history of Israel is in the position of a river which runs for a time underground before it returns to view. There is no Bible narrative of the exile: we know indirectly that the captivity continues for some seventy years (from the earlier captivity) without break; also, that in the interval the Babylonian conquerors are themselves conquered, and their dominions pass into the hands of the Medes and Persians. But the several stories of the exiles cast their brilliant light upon successive points in the life of the captivity. Nowhere is the charm of story greater than in the books of Daniel and of Esther. Through these impressive narratives we are able to see how even in their exile the chosen people continue to witness for their God among the nations."

The Book of Daniel

The book takes its name from that of its hero. It consists of two distinct parts, wholly different in character. In the first part the stories about Daniel and his fellow exiles in Babylon are told simply, yet with great dramatic power. The second part consists of a series of visions, and is rhetorical in style.

The time when the book was written and its purpose are given below in a condensation from Dean Hodges' Child's Guide to the Bible:

The fall of the Kingdom of Israel, completed by the destruction of Samaria at the hands of the Assyrians under Sargon, was in 722 B.C.; the fall of the Kingdom of Judah, completed by the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar, was in 586 B.C.; the exiled Jews were permitted to return to their own land in subjection to the Persians under Cyrus in 536 B.C. The next important date is the conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander in 332 B.C. This brought the Jews under new masters, the Greeks. The Greek period of Jewish history is not recorded in the books of the Bible which we commonly read, but in other books sometimes bound up with the Bible, but more often not, called the Apocrypha. The books of Maccabees in the Apocrypha tell how the Greeks oppressed the Jews. They add to the list of the foreign kings who ruled the Jews—Sargon the Assyrian, Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldean, and Cyrus the Persian—the name of Antiochus the Greek. In the days of this king, whose reign was ended only a little more than a hundred and fifty years before Christ, the book of Daniel was written.

The sufferings of the Jews under Antiochus the Greek were largely due to his determination to turn them all into Greeks. His plan was to change both their customs and their religion. He captured Jerusalem by attacking the city on a Sabbath day when the men would not fight. He placed a Greek altar—which the Jews called "the abomination of desolation"—on the altar of sacrifice. He burned the sacred books, wherever he could find them; he broke down the carved work of the temple with axes and hammers; and he tried to compel all the Jews to give up their worship of the Lord, under pain of death. Against him rose up the Maccabees and succeeded at last in setting the people free. But they were

only beginning their heroic struggle when the author of Daniel was writing his book. The storm was raging about them, and their hearts were failing them for fear. This book was written to console and encourage these grievously afflicted people.

The purpose of these stories of heroism and faith in the book is to assure the people that God will help them as he helped Daniel. As he saved Daniel from Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, from flames and lions, so will he save the Jews from the power of Antiochus.

This assurance is repeated in a series of visions. It was a time when it was not safe to speak plainly, and call Antiochus by name. The writer spoke, accordingly, in symbols, which wise men would understand.

Thus the hearts of the afflicted people were encouraged, their expectation was directed to the coming of the great Prince, the Messiah, who should deliver them out of the hands of their oppressors, and make them again a great and happy people. They were in this expectation a hundred and fifty years after the book of Daniel, when Christ came at last.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

At the time when Daniel was brought to Babylon it was already a very ancient city. Its huge walls were three hundred feet high, and a hundred brazen gates gave entrance to the city. Its Hanging Gardens were one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, and its great temple of Bel was grander than any of the other ancient temples.

The scene of our lesson is in the royal palace. That very palace of Nebuchadnezzar's has been unearthed in our day, for archæologists have dug through the soil brought down by the Euphrates River, which for centuries has covered the site of the city to a depth of fifty feet in places, and now, nearly nineteen centuries after Christ, we can walk over the pavement on which Nebuchadnezzar walked seven centuries before Christ! Little save the brick foundations of the palace remain, but each brick is stamped with Nebuchadnezzar's name and title in cuneiform script. There were several hundred rooms, most of them small. The largest one has a low platform of brick, and this is believed to have been the throne-hall. In the débris many inscriptions have been found, among them this statement, "I thought to build unto heaven."

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

This is the first of four lessons from the Book of Daniel. Read thoughtfully the first six chapters of the book at one sitting, to feel again the fascinating power of the narratives, to catch their heroic note, and to gain the lesson which each has for today. Children listen to these tales with wide-eyed wonder, but when they have become youths and maidens, who have put away childish things, or mature men and women, do they know what are their great lessons? Let us teach them in the spirit in which they were written.

The entire section assigned for our lesson today, 1.1-21, has been discussed under Explanations and Comments, in order to give a connected lesson, but as the verses omitted from our printed text have been again chosen for our temperance lesson the second Sunday in October, they should be lightly passed over today.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

CHARACTER AND CAREER OF DANIEL

Beginning the Lesson

"Daniel stands out in Hebrew history as the man who refused to be absorbed." The opportunity for sharing in the wealth of the Babylonians, of becoming prosperous through agriculture or trade, must have been very alluring to exiles from the stony lands of Judea. Many of them later refused to return to the home land when permission was given, and became absorbed among the people of Babylonia. "This the Puritans feared when they were in Holland. This the prophets feared. Daniel refused to be absorbed. In similar crises later on in Hebrew life, the story of Daniel was probably told to strengthen the faith of the young Hebrews in their culture and in their loyalty to Jehovah. When Alexander sought to impose Greek culture on the Hebrews and make it very attractive by building gymnasiums and conduct-

THE PROCESSIONAL ROAD TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S THRONE-HALL, BABYLON

ing athletic games, the story of Daniel was used to strengthen the faith of those who would break with the traditions of the fathers."

What was the purpose of changing Daniel's name to Belteshazzar? In what other ways was an effort made to make him abandon the standards and principles of his religion?

The Character of Daniel

The prophet Ezekiel classes Daniel with Noah and Job as types of perfect and righteous men. As one reads the story of Daniel one is impressed by the similarity of his character and experiences to those of Joseph. Both were young men of firm principles who could not be swayed from what they thought right; both developed into men who could interpret dreams of monarchs, and both became rulers over great kingdoms.

We admire Daniel's steadfast loyalty to convictions. We admire also the pluck and tact by which he gained his ends. A youth of less moral courage would have yielded to the temptation to self-indulgence and pleasure seeking. A captive in the capital of the ancient world, the palace doors were opening before him if he would merely do as the other young men with whom he was associated were doing, become one of them in habits and customs and religion. If he refused, he was in danger of losing the bright future before him, and of suffering all the degradation and disadvantage of being a foreigner and an exile.

Daniel braved the wrath of the king (and to what that might have led, the second chapter of the book shows us) in avoiding the food and drink which his religion declared ceremonially unclean, but after three years of plain living he was found superior in every way to the other youths who were fed from the royal table, and he became the valued courtier without being a coward to his conscience. Throughout his life he maintained the same loyalty to high principles. He persevered in his daily devotions contrary to the decree of Darius, and was put in the lions' den, but remained unscathed. He ever showed that he could do without the earthly king's favor, but not without the approval of the King of kings.

Not only did Daniel rise to high positions under Nebuchadnezzar but when the latter died and he dropped out of sight for a time, when Belshazzar was on the throne, he became the "first commoner of the empire." The Medo-Persian invasion followed, and under Darius we find him one of the three viziers, and appointed grand vizier for his faithfulness. He was always wise, always faithful to duty, always trustworthy.

Daniel is one of the rare Old Testament characters without guile; no sins are graven on his escutcheon, as Shakespeare's words—"A Daniel come to judgment!"—testify. In him we have an example of steadfast fidelity to the dictates of conscience, no matter what the consequence might be; of perfect self-control, and of unflinching courage—"Dare to be a Daniel" has become a proverb; and of sublime faith in God and tranquil trust in his overruling care.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The masterful policy of the king in gathering the best of the young men from conquered territories for civil service.

2. How can we reach the confidence expressed in the Book of Daniel in the triumph of God in this very world and this very life of which we are a part?—Lynn H. Hough.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. How long did Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty last? 2. What was the affliction that Nebuchadnezzar suffered? 3. Who were on the throne of Babylon between Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus, and how did each ruler meet his death? 4. Of what sins was Belshazzar guilty that last night? 5. By whom and how was Babylon taken? 6. What impression of Daniel do you get from chapters two to five of the Book of Daniel?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

ACHIEVING A STRONG CHARACTER

Beginning the Lesson

In the Memorial Hall of Yale University, where tablets are erected, are written these words:

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the star for ever and ever."

Where is this quotation found? Is it still true? Let us see why it was chosen for our Golden Text today.

How Daniel Met a Severe Test at the Beginning of his Life Work

God had further work for Daniel in Babylon. Early in his exile there his life was in very grave danger. What severe test did Nebuchadnezzar put to his wise men? Why did they fail? Daniel was reported wise, and Nebuchadnezzar had decreed that all the wise men and magicians of all sorts should be put to death. Why? When the officers sought Daniel, did he not have great reason to fear? What did he ask? When it was granted, what did four Hebrew youths do? What was their petition? How was it granted? How did Daniel express his gratitude at being able to meet the king's test? What did he say was the dream? What did it mean? What was Daniel's reward?

Life Is Not a Picnic but a Crusade

As a boy of ten I went to the seaside with thirty or forty adults from my own church at Halifax. They all went for a sail. It was a lovely day. Scarcely a ripple moved the sunny waters. The party had hardly been on the sea ten minutes before the adults began singing, and I have remembered the refrain all my life:

We are out on the ocean sailing
To our home beyond the tides.

I remember that at the time I thought that was a rather soft conception of a voyage. All I was doing, all the rest were doing, was laving the water with our hands as we were carried gently along. We had no errand. We were doing no business. We were being borne along in sunny indolence. And that was just the conception of the Christian life outlined in that particular song.

I have found that the voyage of life is not a picnic but a crusade. The Christian life should not find its symbolism in the sunny picnic in a pleasure boat, but rather in Shackleton's glorious struggle in the teeth of blizzard and hurricane, hacking a hazardous way through miles of Antarctic seas.—J. H. Jowett.

Two Examples of Men Firm of Principle Like Daniel

After Appomattox General Grant urged General Lee to adopt a certain course which he believed would be for the good of all. General Lee did not believe in doing this, and General Grant says in his memoirs, "I knew there was no use to urge him to do anything against his ideas of what was right."

At a dinner given in Washington by Secretary Hamilton Fish in honor of an eminent guest, a Senator present illustrated a point he wished to make by telling a story which spoke scornfully of Christianity. Intense disapproval was written upon the face of Mr. Fish, but the Senator continued his stories. Then Mr. Fish said quietly: "Senator ——, pardon me, but I must request you to desist. I firmly believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. Of his church I am a member; in my house I have tried to honor him, and it is painful to me to hear you speak in this way." There were no more anecdotes derogatory to religion uttered at his table.

Sentence Sermons

"No!" he said, and none then knew the sacrifice it meant,
Nor how the soul to greatness grew through this relinquishment.—
Harold S. Seymour.

You are what you are today because of what you were yesterday: you are the product of the "Yes" that you have said, and the "No."—Margaret Slattery.

Prayer is the secret passage to the light.—David J. Burrell.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What kind of courage does Daniel show in chapter 1? 2. In chapter 2? 3. In chapter 4? 4. Here in chapter 5? 5. Read the entire fifth chapter and be able to tell the story. 6. What does the word *tekel* mean? 7. Your teachers, friends, acquaintances are weighing you each day: how?

LESSON V—AUGUST 4

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST (TEMPERANCE LESSON)

GOLDEN TEXT: Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot. Ephesians 5.18

LESSON Daniel 5.1-31 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 1

DANIEL 5.17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; nevertheless I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty: 19 and because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21 and he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts', and his dwelling was with the wild asses; he was fed with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; until he knew that the Most High God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and that he setteth up over it whomsoever he will. 22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this, 23 but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine from them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know; and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. 24 Then was the part of the hand sent from before him, and this writing was inscribed.

25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and brought it to an end. 27 TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. 28 PERES; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST, verses 1-4. Belshazzar (see The Historical Background) invited a thousand of his lords to a great feast, at which they drank wine from the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem. And as they drank they praised the gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

Quick the king spoke, while his proud glance burned,
Quickly the servant went and returned.
He bore on his head the vessels of gold
Of Jehovah's temple the plunder bold.
With daring hand, in his frenzy grim,
The king seized a beaker and filled to the brim,
And drained to the dregs the sacred cup,
And foaming he cried, as he drank it up,
"Jehovah, eternal scorn, I own
To thee. I am monarch of Babylon."

Thus the German poet Heine pictures the scene. Even to a pagan mind such a use of sacred vessels was sacrilege. It was a bold defiance of the Most High God.

II. THE WRITING ON THE PALACE WALL WHICH THE WISE MEN FAIL TO INTERPRET, verses 5-9. While they were thus reveling, they saw the fingers of a man's hand write upon the wall. Belshazzar trembled and called for the enchanters and soothsayers to interpret the writing, but they could neither read nor interpret it.

III. ON THE QUEEN'S ADVICE, DANIEL IS BROUGHT BEFORE THE KING, verses 13-16. The queen entered the banquet house and tried to calm the king by telling him that there was a man in his kingdom whom Nebuchadnezzar his father had made master of all the wise men, and he could interpret the dream. So Daniel was sent for. The king told Daniel that he had heard of him and his wisdom, and if he would read and interpret the writing he should be clothed with purple (the royal attire), have a chain of gold about his neck and be the third ruler in the kingdom.

IV. DANIEL REMINDED THE KING OF HIS FATHER'S FATE, AND OF HIS OWN FOREWARNING, verses 17-24. "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another," said Daniel to Belshazzar the King; and then assured the king that he would interpret the writing for him. But first he reminded Belshazzar how Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had become so great through God's favor that "all the peoples, nations and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would he slew (see Dan. 2.12, 13; 3.6; 11.3, 16, 36), and whom he would he kept alive; and as he wished he exalted or debased his people. But when he became proud (when his heart was lifted up, Dan. 4.30, 31) and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne and his glory taken from him. He became like the beasts and dwelt among them; he ate the grass like oxen, and lived out under the open sky: this was his life until he recognized the supreme sovereignty of the Most High God. "His penalty was nothing absolutely abnormal. His illness is well known to science as that form of hypochondriasis (madness) in which a man takes himself for a wolf, or a dog, or some other animal. Probably the fifth century monks, who were known as the 'Boskoi' from feeding on grass, may have been, in many cases, half maniacs who in time took themselves for oxen" (F. W. Farrar).

Now comes Daniel's application of this event in Nebuchadnezzar's life which he recalled to the mind of Nebuchadnezzar's son. "Though thou knewest how great Nebuchadnezzar was humbled, thou hast not humbled thy heart," he solemnly said, and then charged Belshazzar with having drunk wine, he and his court, out of the sacred vessels purloined from the temple at Jerusalem. And then he charged the king with having praised senseless images called gods, and having neglected the true God who created him (in whose hand thy breath is).

"You must not think that this was the only warning that Belshazzar had received. If it came too late, that was because it was the warning of retribution, not the warning of mercy; it was only because all previous warnings had been neglected and despised. Nebuchadnezzar's dreams of the shattered colossus and the felled tree; the brute madness which had afflicted him; the besieging of his own city; the fact that the shouts of an enemy might have mingled with the very songs of his banquet,—these were warning to this crowned fool, but they had all been fruitless."

Is it not literally an everyday experience that an inscription always before the eyes is little heeded? I imagine that the ancient Athenians paid little heed to the moral sentences which were carved upon the Hermæ in every street. I imagine that the Turks of Constantinople have taken but little notice of that 'O χριστδς νικᾳ (The Christ conquers) which remains, legible and unobliterated, like a prophecy which shall still be fulfilled, upon their central mosque.

And just in the same way do we not, all of us alike, often thus neglect and forget the notices of God? Yes; and that is why in dealing with us he is obliged now and then to make us see them—to force their meaning into us—to interpret them again when the dimmed wall has been painted over with other symbols, and familiarity has made them meaningless to eyes that will not see" (F. W. Farrar).

"Then," concluded Daniel, "the part of the hand was sent before him,"—the fingers of a man's hand, verse 5—and this writing was inscribed.

> "The moving finger writes; and having writ
> Moves on: nor all thy piety, nor wit
> Shall lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all thy tears wash out one word of it"—(Omar Khayyam).

"The feast clearly took place in the palace; and it is evident that when the king saw the vision he was under the influence of wine. Either of two things may have helped to cause the vision. One is that the words, *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,* may have been there, before the king's eyes, permanently inscribed on the wall, in cuneiform characters. The standards of weights and measures were probably kept at the palace, and there would be fixed spots in the palace halls for testing them, or possibly for weighing the royal revenues, which may have been paid in kind as well as in coin. Near the spot where this was done the words recorded may have been inscribed; *Mene* marking the place where the goods were counted; *Tekel,* that where

they were weighed; and *Upharsin,* that where they were classified as to quality, and separated. (I am told that such a thing is to be seen in the cathedral at Freiburg, in the Black Forest, where a loaf of bread on the wall marks the spot where the town bread is weighed.) The other supposition is that the inscriptions may not have been in the Banquet Hall, but in some other part of the palace, where the king had often seen them, and that they came up vividly to his mind. Or a serving-man may have opened a door, through which they became visible from the royal seat. The vision of the hand was due to Belshazzar's guilty conscience, as he knew that he was committing sacrilege in drinking out of the holy vessels from Jerusalem" (Margaret D. Gibson).

"It would seem that sins against the body, and certain stages of these sins, have a peculiar power of awakening to vivid terror this human instinct of judgment. The insulted temple of God reverberates to the blasphemies of the polluting human passion, and gives back their echoes as voices of the divine judgment. The records of the awakening of conscience in men who have soaked themselves in drink are full of this sudden horror. The conscience-sleep which the swallowing of alcohol is intended to secure is rudely broken as by an unseen hand, and in a terrible swift sobriety the unhappy man finds himself face to face with the issues of his sin. 'One Tuesday evening,' so runs the memorable story of the conversion of S. H. Hadley, the friend of the outcast, 'I sat in a saloon in Harlem, a homeless, friendless, dying drunkard. As I sat there thinking, I seemed to feel some great and mighty Presence. I did not then know what it was. I walked up to the bar, and said I would never take another drink if I died on the street.' And it is in strictest accord with the experience of many men in a plight that the message of judgment written in letters of fire across the heated brain is seen as an objective reality upon the wall of the room or on the sky. Kipling has described this vision of a remorseful soul in a sentence which has become a classic:

> When the drunken comrade mutters
> And the great guard lantern gutters
> And the horror of our fall is written plain,
> Every secret self-revealing on the aching whitewashed ceiling,
> Do you wonder that we drug ourselves from pain?

Now it is this experience which is recorded of Belshazzar for our warning" (G. G. Johnston Ross).

V. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE WRITING, verses 25-28. This is the writing that was inscribed: *Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,* that is, *Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, and Divisions,* as the words are given literally in the margin of our Bible. The words are Aramaic, and in the Hebrew Bible the whole story is told in Aramaic, not Hebrew. "The three words are really the names of three weights: a mina, a shekel, and half-shekels. The puzzle consisted partly in the character or manner in which they were supposed to have been written—an unfamiliar form of the Aramaic character, for instance, or, as the mediæval Jews suggested, a vertical instead of a horizontal arrangement of the letters; partly in the difficulty of attaching any meaning to them even when they were read; what could the names of three weights signify? Here Daniel's skill in 'declaring riddles' (verse 12) comes in. *Mene* means numbered as well as a mina; *Tekel* suggests *tekil,* weighed" (Driver). The U in *Upharsin* stands for *and,* and *P(H)arsin* is the plural of *peres"* (Dummelow). *"Parsin* or *peres,* a half shekel, points allusively to a double interpretation: Thy Kingdom is divided, *peres,* and given to the Medes and Persians, Aramaic *paras"* (Driver). Professor Moulton's supposition is that they were in three columns and were read downward, upwards and then downwards, thus:

M U P
E L H
N E A
E K R
M E S
E T I
N E N

"We too, shall be weighed in the balances and found what? If we put our lives into God's hands now we need have no fear of passing into his

hands then. We have our temptations, but they are not greater than those of Belshazzar. We have our endowment and our opportunities and they may be even greater than his because of the age in which we live. But this is certain: we have what Belshazzar had not—the example and teaching of Jesus Christ and the grace that never fails those who avail themselves of help divine" (J. W. G. Ward).

VI. DANIEL PROMOTED: BELSHAZZAR SLAIN, verses 29, 30. That Belshazzar fulfilled his promise (verse 16) in the face of imminent danger to his realm, is remarkable. "Let us remember that if this royal pagan could not keep his kingdom, he kept his word" (Phelps). That night Belshazzar was slain, and Darius the Mede received the kingdom.

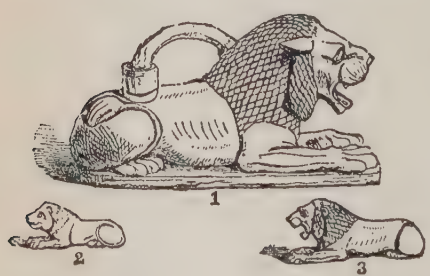
"Crownless and scepterless Belshazzar lay,
A robe of purple round a form of clay."

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Mene, Tekel, Upharsin, verse 25. Enigmatic writing of this kind is many times referred to in the history of the country where Belteshazzar and Belshazzar lived, and the art is not obsolete yet.

"Incensed at the refusal of his requests by the authorities at Bagdad, Sultan Muhammad el Ghaznawy wrote and threatened the caliph, saying: 'If I but choose, I can deport the very stones of Bagdad to Ghaznat on elephants.' The caliph duly returned a sealed answer. When the sultan opened it, only three letters were to be seen: 'aleph' (A) at the top, 'lam' (l) in the middle and 'mim' (m) at the bottom of the page. Then the sultan's countenance was changed in him, and his thoughts troubled him. The experts and specialists of his court, who represented the enchanters, Chaldeans, and soothsayers of Belshazzar, were summoned, and first one and then another took up the enigmatic letter with eagerness but laid it down in despair. Then was Sultan Muhammad more troubled, and his lords were perplexed. At length Abu Beke el Khasatany appeared and said, 'I will read the writing unto the sultan.' And after due and reverent study of the three-lettered document, he said, 'The letters, a, l, m, spell the interrogative phrase "Dost not" (which opens chapter 105 of the noble Koran): "Dost not thou know that which thy Lord did to the army on elephants?" The verse is well known, and refers to an equally well-known historical incident,—namely, the invasion of Mecca and the Hedjaz by the Abyssinians on elephants when they were unexpectedly discomfited and routed. 'You,' said Abu Beke, 'threatened the caliph by elephants, and he reminds you of the fate of elephants long ago. Beware!' The sultan repented, and sued for pardon."—Mrs. Ghosn el Howie.

Thou art weighed in the balances, verse 27. On the walls of the famous Rock Tomb of Thebes there is a representation of the Hall of Judgment. Osiris, the presiding deity, holds in one hand a shepherd's crook and in the other a scourge, while on the scales of justice before him lies the heart of a human being.



Bronze Weights
1 Fifteen Minas
2 Three Shekels
3 One Mina

In the ancient Egyptian book of Ami, there is a rough illustration of the god of the scales. Into one side of the balance is put the man's heart, with all the good works he has done in his life; while into the other side is put a Roll of the Law: the scales are to tell whether or not the man has fulfilled the requirements of the moral code.

"It is highly probable," says Layard, "that the curious series of bronze lions discovered at Nimrod during my first researches were used for weights. Since the coating of green rust has been removed from them, they are found in several instances to have two short inscriptions, one in cuneiform characters with the name of Sennacherib, the other in Phœnician letters."

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Chaldean Dynasty in Babylon

The Chaldean dynasty in Babylon was short-lived, only eighty-eight years in all. Nebuchadnezzar died in 561 B.C., and left his great, well-organized empire to his weak son Evil-Merodach. (From 2 K. 25.27-30 we learn that this king freed Jehoiakim after an imprisonment of thirty-seven years, and gave him a place at the royal table.) After a reign of two years, Evil-Merodach was murdered by one of his officers, Nergalsharuzur, or Nergasharezer as he is called in Jer. 39.3, who commanded Nebuchadnezzar's army at the capture and destruction of Jerusalem. Though he prayed to his god Marduk for a long life and a stable throne, he lived only four years. Nine months after his young son Labashi-Marduk became king, some of the nobles formed a conspiracy, murdered the king, and placed Nabonidus, one of their own number, on the throne.

Nabonidus strengthened the wall of Babylon along the Euphrates, for danger threatened from the north, but his great interest centered in restoring and adorning the temples of the gods. Because he did more for the old Babylonian and Assyrian gods than for the favorite gods of the people—Marduk, Bel, and Nebo—his people grew to hate him, especially after he left his capital for Tema and the great religious feasts could no longer be observed without the presence of the king.

The Career of Cyrus

Meanwhile Cyrus was acquiring his title of the Great. In 559 B.C. he was king of Anshan, the native name of the little state among the mountains northeast of Babylon, which the Assyrians and Hebrews called Elam. In 549 B.C. he made himself master of Media; by 546 B.C. he captured Nabonidus and Babylon, and adopted the title of "King of Babylon and King of Countries." He was in truth master of all the world then worth having, with the exception of Egypt.

A cylinder inscription says: "To the city of Babylon he [the god Merodach] commanded him [Cyrus] to go, he made him take the road to Babylon; like a friend and helper he went by his side, without contest and battle he made him enter into Babylon his city; Babylon he spared from tribulation. All the people of Babylon, princes and governors, kissed his feet; they rejoiced in his kingdom, bright was their countenance." It was Cyrus who finally permitted the Hebrew exiles to return to Jerusalem.

Belshazzar and the Fall of Babylon

Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon. His son was the Belshazzar of our lesson. Because no secular historian names Belshazzar, it was argued that he never existed. But in the ruins of a temple at Mugheir [Ur] an inscription giving an

Portion of the Façade of a Babylonian Palace

account of the restoration of the temple of Sin, the Moongod, by Nabonidus [called Nabonahid] has been discovered which contains these words: "As for me, Nabonidus, King of Babylon, from sin against thy great divinity save me, and a life of remote days give as a gift; and as for Belshazzar, the eldest son, the offspring of my heart, the fear of thy great divinity cause thou to exist in his heart and let not sin possess him—let him be satisfied with fullness of life." Belshazzar was the heir to the throne

of Babylon, but the monuments do not indicate that he ever reigned. The Book of Daniel calls him King of Babylon; he seems to have been the commander of the army, and he may have governed Babylon as viceroy and have been popularly known as king, or he may have actually shared the throne with his father Nabonidus.

When Cyrus in his triumphant progress marched toward Babylon, Nabonidus met him on the northern border of Babylonia and his army was defeated. The Persian army under the generalship of Gobryas captured the north Babylonian town of Sippar, and next entered the outer part of Babylon without a battle, and captured Nabonidus, who had retreated to the city. The history is not clear, but probably Belshazzar was in command of the inner city, and feeling secure behind its huge walls, was feasting one night two weeks later, when Cyrus himself made his triumphant entry. "That night Belshazzar was slain."

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

REVELING AND RUIN

Beginning the Lesson

Begin with The Historical Background.

The Charge against Belshazzar of Drunkenness

When the Allies entered Paris after the battle of Waterloo, the rattle of artillery over the pavement prevented a large audience in one of the theaters from hearing the play: they had the doors closed and then gave no further thought to what those ominous sounds meant. So to Belshazzar came the report of the approach of the enemy from the north, and soon the noise of the arrival could be heard at the very walls of the city; but he shut himself up within his palace and gave himself up to the enjoyment of a great feast, with its accompaniments of "wine, women and song."

Though Thou Knewest All This!

If only myself could talk to myself
As I knew him a year ago,
I could tell him a lot
That would save him a lot,
Of things he ought to know.

So muses Kipling, and he voices the thoughts of us all. We profit by our own experiences, but too late to "save us a lot." Coleridge says somewhere that experience is like the stern-lights of a ship: it illumines only the path over which we have already traveled. But other ships have gone over the same path ahead of us, and their stern-lights have shown us the dangerous reefs in time for us to avoid them. The experiences of others could and should warn us of dangers in our own pathway before we traverse it.

Belshazzar had known how Nebuchadnezzar's proud heart had been humbled and his rebellious spirit punished. But Belshazzar failed to profit by the experience of Nebuchadnezzar; he had not taken the lesson to himself. This is the thought that Daniel emphasized in the words: "Thou, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this!"

Are We Orgulous?

Orgulous is marked in the dictionary as an obsolete word, but do we not need it still in our vocabulary? If the creature is not extinct, shall its name be forgotten? To be orgulous means more than to be proud. It means to cherish pride as a mark of nobility and to display it as a principle of conduct. It means that the natural note of exultation has been prolonged in an endless symphony of self-praise, and the grateful consciousness of success has hardened into an inflexible sense of superiority.

Material wealth and prosperity tend to promote this spirit in men and nations. Can we not read the record of it in the history of ancient Babylon and Rome? Were there not signs of it in the Paris of the first Napoleon and the Berlin of the Second William Hohenzollern? Has it never shown its tentacles in New York or Washington? Did it not speak American in the doggerel, "The Yankee nation can lick all creation?"

Talking with René Bazin in a cold Parisian attic during the darkest period of the Great War, I asked him if he could name the cause of the great conflict.

"Bien sûr, c'est l'orgueil," he answered—"Sure, it is the orgulous spirit."—Henry van Dyke, in Six Days of the Week.

The Temptation to Make Life a Revelry

There are seasons when we would all like to waltz merrily through life and drain its sparkling wine cups to the very dregs. In certain moods we would like to have a good time of it—do just what we like, chase every butterfly, sip every flower-cup and pamper every whim. So strong is this drift that men will pursue pleasure regardless of solemn threats and impending disasters. On this particular night the forces of the Medes and the Persians surrounded Babylon, and even in the midst of the revelry the deadly thud of their battering rams was heard, but Belshazzar cried, "Up with the cups and on with the dance." This is a most solemn illustration of the mesmeric might of pleasure over a man's soul. But we see the same things today. Men will get drunk, women will play bridge, young people will have their fill of pleasure, while their dearest of kin are trembling on the verge of eternity. When pleasure gets hold of a person it makes him regardless of every sacred feeling and of every overhanging danger.

Belshazzar feasted on, but into his revels there came this awful finger engraving the dread words silently on the walls. The drinking was high, but this could not be forgotten. The dance swung along, but this could not be ignored. The king had an army of a myriad men, but all their prowess could not blot out the writing on the wall. Quietly, inexorably, silently, indelibly, the three dread words were engraved on the palace wall. We too might fling ourselves into the mad race for gold and enjoyment, but in our quiet and more thoughtful moments the divine finger inevitably comes and inscribes upon the walls of our conscience the awful words, *"Mene, Tekel, Upharsin."* We are solemnly warned that this life must come to an end, and after that the judgment. "Rejoice, young man, but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." To live for self is to lose the kingdom of our manhood. It is to be uncrowned. It is to be defeated and destroyed.—Thomas Phillips.

Our Palace of Lawlessness

We, too, live in an age when a palace of lawlessness has been erected. We, too, hear the scornful voices of those who make light jest of the vessels of the temple where the austerity of a pure life and the glory of self-control still command the loyalty of men. With a gay riot of color in pictures which flash before us in places of amusement, with the witchery of haunting phrase in novels hot with a desire which knows no moral master, in the eyes which look out of bright young faces where there is none of the strength of obedience and none of the trustworthiness of self-restraint, in all these ways and places we experience our palace of anarchy. The music is loud. The wine flows freely. The feast is turbulent with song. In the midst of it all there is a strange restlessness in our hearts. And we find ourselves casting anxious glances at the walls.

It is a matter of profound satisfaction that on every hand signs are appearing of a discontent with our contemporary palace of lawlessness. The restless sense that all is not well is making itself felt all over the world. Men cannot live by husks alone. And somehow the wine of indulgence does not taste well in the vessels consecrated to pure character and high worship. We are weighing ourselves in the balances. We are weighing our time in the balances. We are weighing the bright winged young apostles of lawlessness in the balances. And all are found wanting. It is a sobering process. But it is the beginning of a better day.—Lynn H. Hough, in The Christian Advocate.

A Fable of Prohibition

Once upon a time there was a great giant who lived in a big castle. No one knew just how he came there, for the castle belonged to a large family of common-sized people. But the giant had always lived there, and the people had come to take him for granted.

The giant ate a large amount of their food and took up a good deal of their room. But they put up with that, for he was a jolly good fellow and often kept the people in a gale of laughter.

But there was one bad feature about this giant. His breath was poison. When he had talked and sung until the people all felt jolly they became stupefied by his breath. Often they were not able to work for days, and they suffered many pains

and much sickness. Some of them became violent and killed their own kin; others were made insane.

After many years the people succeeded by a great struggle in driving the poisonous giant outside the castle. But he hung about outside and kept his big foot in the gateway so that the door could not be quite shut. Then he would blow his breath in through the crack and make some of the people sick as before.

Now the giant is saying, "Good people, you are really worse off than ever. Since I do not have the good food that you fed me my breath is twice as poisonous and does more harm than before. I will never let you shut the door completely. So you would better let me come back in again. Then I will help you shut the door and keep it shut."

And the old giant with the poison breath has actually fooled some people until they are ready to open the gate and let him in again.—William O. Rogers.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The inevitable weighing of character.

2. When men have ceased to be capable of reverence they are still capable of fear. When they have lost the capacity for moral decision they still retain the capacity for superstitious dread.—Lynn H. Hough.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Read the entire chapter. 2. How had Daniel aroused the enmity of influential men in the realm? 3. What was the expressed motive and what was the real motive for the request of the satraps? 4. What do we mean when we say "It is the law of the Medes and Persians"? 5. What illustration of that law is given in the Book of Esther? 6. Under what circumstances is it justifiable, if ever, not to keep one's word? 7. Why did Daniel have his windows open toward Jerusalem? 8. Is the bodily attitude in prayer important? 9. Does God deliver from danger every one who trusts him?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

WHAT DRINK LEADS TO

Beginning the Lesson

According to Confucius, there was a certain water-vessel which hung obliquely when empty, vertically when half full, and turned over and spilled its contents when full to the brim. This water-vessel was hung on the right of the throne to warn its occupant against "fulness," or the pride which precedes a fall. Nebuchadnezzar had needed such a warning. "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by the might of my power?" he cried in all his pride, and then when his heart was lifted up, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and driven forth in his madness as a wild beast till he learned that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men and that he setteth upon it whomsoever he will.

And Belshazzar's heart, like his father Nebuchadnezzar's, was lifted up with pride, and then retribution came to him also. How? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

What Drink Led to at the Marne

At the Marne on September 9, 1914, the Prussian Guard smashed through Foch's right. They were wild with joy. The French line was pierced. They at once began celebrating, at La Frère-Champenoise. When this was announced to Foch he telegraphed to headquarters: "My center gives way, my right recedes; the situation is excellent. I shall attack." For this, we must remember, is the man who says, "A battle won is a battle in which one is not able to believe one's self vanquished!" He gave the order to attack. Everything that he cared about in this world was at stake. This desperate maneuver would save it all—or it would not.

Toward six o'clock on that evening the Germans, celebrating their certain victory, saw themselves confronted by a "new" French army pouring into the gap they had thought their road to Paris. The Forty-second Division had not only blocked the roundabout road to Paris, they had broken the morale of Von Buelow's crack troop.

At nine o'clock the next morning (September 10), the Forty-second entered La Frère-Champenoise where they found officers of the Prussian Guard lying, dead drunk, on the floors in the cantonments, surrounded by innumerable bottles of stolen champagne wherewith they had been celebrating their victory.—Clara Laughlin, in Foch the Man.

What Will He Become?

Many years ago an English publishing house put out a book entitled, A Self-Educator. To make the book known a poster was issued with the heading, "What Will He Become?" In the center of the page below the heading was a picture of a bright looking lad. Below across the page ran three pictures representing the lad as he might appear from boyhood to youth, to manhood, and to old age; in each the face was cultured, refined, noble. Below this set of pictures were yet three others, representing the same ages, but each face more disreputable looking than the preceding, and the last one that of a drunken, dissolute wretch. Which set of pictures will prove the true one if he does not heed the Golden Text?

"So live that you yourself—the man you ought to be—may in his time be possible and actual," counsels a college president. "Far away in the thirties, the forties, of the twentieth century, he is waiting his turn. His body, his brain, his soul are in your boyish hands. He cannot help himself. What will you leave for him? Will it be a brain unspoiled by lust or dissipation, a mind trained to think and act, a nervous system true as a dial in its response to the truth about you? Will you, boy of the twentieth century, let him come as a man among men in his time, or will you throw away his inheritance before he has had a chance to touch it? Will you let him come, taking your place, gaining through your experience, hallowed through your joys, building on them his own, or will you fling his hope away, decreeing wanton-like, that the man you might have been shall never be?"

To What Drink Leads

Drink begets insolence and profanity. It was after he had tasted the wine that Belshazzar committed the impiety of desecrating the sacred vessels of the temple by having them summoned to his wicked feast. Strong drink destroys a man's balance, his sense of the fitness of things, his self-control, his sense of reverence. It takes away the understanding, as Hosea says (4.11). In Isaiah 5.11 we see how it dulled the spiritual sense, blinded men to the workings of God in their own lives and in national history. Here, in Daniel, we see how it leads to insolence and a defiant and blasphemous disregard of the most sacred things. It is surely wisdom to fear and shun so deadly a foe of religion and of all that makes for reverence, stability, and sobriety in life. Indulgence in alcohol, by weakening or destroying the spirit of self-control, of reverence, of regard for others, too often leads to profanity and godlessness and ends in death.—J. E. McFadyen.

The World Is Watching Our Law

At one of the meetings held by E. Stanley Jones in a theater in India, a prince was the chairman. Mr. Jones was told that the prince was hard hit by drink, but it was thought he could be kept sufficiently sober to be chairman for one night. After the meeting the latter invited Mr. Jones to see him at his palace the next day. Mr. Jones went, and during his visit begged the prince to give up drink and give himself to Christ. "I can't do it," the prince cried, "the fact is that I was almost a Christian when I first went to England, for Christianity appealed to me because of its sense of brotherhood; but I was educated there with Macaulay in one hand and a whisky bottle in the other. But I will make you this promise. I am going to America, and since you have prohibition in America, I won't be able to get it then, so I will give it up when I go there."

"The whole world is bending over in expectancy to see what we are going to do with this matter of prohibition," comments Mr. Jones. If we should fail, it would set back the clock of moral progress for fifty or a hundred years."

Sentence Sermons

Crime and punishment grow out of one stem.—Emerson.

The whiskey business is like throwing sand in the bearings of a steam engine.—Thomas Edison.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Read the entire sixth chapter. 2. What did Daniel's enemies say of him in verses 4 and 5? 3. Why were they his enemies? 4. How did they flatter the king? 5. What is an "interdict"? 6. Was Daniel's position at prayer (verse 10) an act of bravado? 7. Daniel's enemies were certain that he would offer his prayers as usual: what if he had shut his windows and prayed in secret? 8. Does it make a difference if you fail to do what others have a right to expect of a Christian?

DANIEL AMONG THE LIONS

GOLDEN TEXT: The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. Psalm 34.7

LESSON Daniel 6.1-28 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 91.9-16

DANIEL 6.10 And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem); and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. 11 Then these men assembled together, and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. *Now* the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. 17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. 18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep fled from him.

19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20 And when he came near unto the den to Daniel, he cried with a lamentable voice; the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? 21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. 23 Then was the king exceeding glad, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he had trusted in his God.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. DANIEL'S PROMOTION, verses 1-3. It pleased Darius (see The Historical Background) to make Daniel one of the three presidents over his satraps, and because "an excellent spirit was in Daniel," the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

II. THE INGENIOUS PLOT OF DANIEL'S ENEMIES, verses 4-15. The jealousy of the other two presidents and of all the satraps led them to try to compass Daniel's death. His record was unassailable; they saw that only on the ground of his religion could he be attacked. They then concocted a scheme so to play upon the king's vanity as to induce him to pass a law that for thirty days no one should ask a petition of any god or man save the king only—as though he were a god to whom the whole nation must pay divine honors. Whoever should violate this decree should be cast to the lions. There was no allusion to Daniel; the king was immensely flattered and, all unsuspicious of the purpose behind the request, fell into their trap. Evidently he took no time for reflection, but immediately signed the law, and the law of the Medes and Persians altereth not. The unalterableness of a decree of a Persian king is frequently referred to in the Book of Esther.

"Darius illustrates the danger of adopting suggestions without considering their consequences. The probable consequences of acts which we contemplate should always be carefully considered, especially in their bearings upon others" (J. E. McFadyen).

Daniel continued his habit of prayer just as he did before the decree was issued; and not only did he pray but he gave thanks in the face of the fate he knew was approaching.

"Early in the morning, before you come down into the streets of Babylon to hear its talk and breathe its impoverished atmosphere, open your windows. Look out upon the sources of strength. Wait upon it until your soul mounts up with wings like an eagle. Wait upon it until your moral nature can run upon errands of usefulness and not grow weary. Let your heart gain a fresh sense of the moral interest it cherishes toward you—and you will not be afraid of Babylon and all its lions" (Charles R. Brown).

Three times a day Daniel knelt in his chamber before his windows which were open toward Jerusalem. Jerusalem—and especially the temple—was to a devout Jew the most sacred spot on earth. Compare Solomon's words about captives praying toward the land, 1 K. 8.44, 48, and Ps. 5.7; Jonah 2.4. "A score of open lattices might indicate nothing save that the heat was lessening. But the lattice of Daniel open toward Jerusalem was the witness of a heroic heart. It was the index of a soul that in seductive Babylon was true to the God and the temple of its race. It revealed a spirit which honors could not destroy, a love which distance was powerless to quench, a heroism which no impending doom could shake" (G. H. Morrison).

"We cannot accept that psychology which declares that we react inevitably to the impressions that pour in upon us through the apertures of the five senses. We have limited power, but a very real power, of selection. The Babel sounds of life hammer at our ears; the kaleidoscopic maze bewilders our vision; but we choose the direction toward which we open the windows of our attention and interest.

"If our lives are to be compared to receivers of radio transmission, we have at least an option as to the wave lengths on which we shall tune in. It is our privilege to select the side of our life on which chiefly the impulses from without shall come to us. It is equally our privilege to select the avenues through which some of our activities shall emerge.

"There is too little praying with open windows through which our prayers can escape the confinement of selfishness, windows through which God's blessing can gain access to us, windows through which our energies, liberated by prayer, can flow out into the life and thought of the world in deeds of love and service" (The Youth's Companion).

Daniel's enemies were on the watch, and with malicious joy they sought the king. Craftily they led him to repeat the decree he had made. Compare their respectful words of address in verse 7, "King Darius, live for ever," when they wished to gain the decree from the king, with their abrupt words now, "Hast thou not signed," etc., which apparently show contempt of the king whom they could so easily use for their own ends. And then they announced that *that Daniel* (how the contemptuous words betray their jealousy) had transgressed the new law. The king was sore displeased. So was Herod, when Herodias's daughter demanded the head of John the Baptist. Herod had given his word, and he had the Baptist put to death; Darius had given his word, and he ordered the death of Daniel, although he labored till the going down of the sun to rescue him. But he was powerless before his own law, as the crafty men reminded him.

"We would better appear cowards before men than before God. 'Honor rooted in dishonor' is best repudiated at the earliest moment. Nothing is binding that is inhuman, nothing that is impious, nothing that is unjust. Let us watch lest we make snares for ourselves" (W. L. Watkinson).

III. HOW THE PLOT FAILED, verses 16-23. As Daniel was consigned to the den of lions, the king said to him, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee."

"What impression are we making upon observers—Dariuses who are looking at us? Do they expect us to be delivered, honored, crowned, because servants of God?" (Joseph Parker).

After sealing the mouth of the den with his seal, the king passed the night sleepless and fasting, and in the morning hastened to the den.

"Heed how thou livest. Do no act by day
Which from the night shall drive thy peace away" (Whittier).

With "lamentable voice," a voice quivering with grief, he cried to Daniel. "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths," answered Daniel, who was there unharmed. "We need not be incredible about the actual deliverance of Daniel," thinks Dr. W. L. Watkinson, "for there are men whom bees will not sting, nor dogs bite, and who find the wild beasts of the forest tame." Then was the king exceeding glad and ordered Daniel's release. His deliverance from the lions is expressely declared to be because he had trusted in God.

"In truth we have here the story of two kinds of deliverance. In the first place Daniel was delivered from fear of the lions, and in the second place he was delivered from the lions themselves. The first deliverance constituted his great moral victory. Fear of the lions could not make him false. He came to a place of strength where if he had to choose between character and death he chose character. When fear is unable to turn a man from his loyalty to righteousness he has been delivered from fear. It is one of the supreme experiences of life.

"It is at this point that the narrative brings a message which speaks in the terms of what may be our own experience. We cannot always be delivered from the lions. Sometimes we must pay a price of severe loss for loyalty to our highest standards, but we can all be delivered from fear of the lions. We may all reach the place of loyalty which is steady in spite of threat or danger or adverse circumstances, and whenever evil has lost its power to thwart our loyalty to good we have been delivered from it, even though it may bring manifold woes upon us" (Lynn H. Hough).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

His windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, verse 10. "Jews in foreign lands turn in prayer toward the land of Jerusalem; in the land of Jerusalem, toward Jerusalem; and in Jerusalem, toward the Temple," says the Talmud. Mohammed first ordered his disciples to face Jerusalem when they prayed, but after his quarrel with the Jews he had them face Mecca. In all Mohammedan mosques there is today a niche, or small alcove, called the Mihrab, which marks the Kiblah, the direction in which Mecca lies. When we visited Turkish mosques with a Mohammedan dragoman, we learned that to him the lofty domes, the spacious floors with their wonderful rugs, the corner pulpits, even the serpentine pillars in St. Sophia that came from the temple of Ephesus and the porphyry columns brought there from the temple of Baalbec, were of no consequence compared with the Mihrabs which he always pointed out with awe, and toward which he faced and offered a prayer when we were otherwise occupied.

Letting out the Lion

The law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not, verse 12. The strict etiquette of the Persian court obliged the king never to revoke an order once given, however much he might regret it, because in so doing he would contradict himself, and, according to Persian notions, the law could not contradict itself. A curious instance of the unchangeable character of the Medo-Persian law is seen in the fact that, after Ahasuerus had issued the order directing the cruel slaughter of the Jews (Esther 3.13), he would not reverse it even at the urgent request of Esther, but he issued another edict in which he granted the Jews permission to "gather themselves together, and to stand for their life." Thus the first irreversible edict was completely neutralized by another just as irreversible as itself; and the king continued to act his part as a character but little short of divinity; infallible, immutable, and wholly free from the weakness of repentance!—James Freeman, in Bible Manners and Customs.

A Seal Cylinder

The den of lions, verse 10. Babylonia abounded in lions, and lion-hunting is the royal sport frequently pictured on walls and tablets. The Persians had large enclosed parks which they called "Paradises," where lions, tigers, boars, and other wild animals were kept for the royal chase. Sometimes a lion was brought into the field in a portable cage, and a slave standing on the top raised the gate to liberate it for the hunt, as our illustration shows.

And with the signet of his lords, verse 17. "Every Babylonian of any importance

at all carried a seal, generally in the shape of a cylinder, which was used to stamp baked-clay documents of all kinds." One too poor to own a seal made an impression with his thumb on the damp clay. It is interesting to recall that the signet, or seal, of Darius Hystaspis represented the king as engaged in a lion hunt.

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Daniel's Position in the Medo-Persian Empire

After interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel was made "to rule over the whole province of Babylon, and to be chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon." On the death of that monarch he seems to have lost his high position, for Belshazzar, as we saw last week, as a reward for interpreting the handwriting on the wall, exalted him, making him the "third ruler in the kingdom." Belshazzar was slain, but Darius the Mede made Daniel one of the three presidents who controlled the one hundred and twenty satraps.

Darius and Cyrus

According to Dan. 5.31, Darius the Mede conquered Belshazzar the Chaldean King; and according to Dan. 6.28, Cyrus the Persian followed Darius. Darius is a perplexing problem, for he is not mentioned in secular history, and the conqueror of Babylon was Cyrus, not Darius. But inscriptions have been found which show that Belshazzar, the son of Nabonidus, was associated with his father as ruler of Babylon and was killed by the army of Cyrus under Gobryas, and a tablet dated thirteen years after the fall of Babylon calls Gobryas governor of Babylon. It has been conjectured that Darius the Mede was another name for Gobryas, who ruled as governor under Cyrus.

Daniel's House

Daniel's house was probably a large building in Babylon where he "did the king's business," many of whose rooms were set apart for the various officials who were under his superintendence. His "chamber" was built upon one corner of the flat roof, or formed the upper part of a tower-like addition to the main building.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Our story of Daniel illustrates the duty of keeping up the prayer habit even when tempted to abandon it. A Sunday-school worker who has investigated the prayer habit of pupils young and old, in hundreds of schools, reports that scarcely five per cent kneel for a word of prayer in the morning. Do you know what is the prayer habit of your pupils? If you do not, make use of the opportunity which this lesson affords to discover this.

Daniel had perfect trust in God. Perfect trust in God makes prayer a reality. And equally true is it that real prayer leads to perfect trust in God. "We do not pray because we believe in God; we believe in God because we pray," declares Dr. Lyman Abbott, and then he illustrates his seemingly strange statement thus: "A mother wishes her child to grow into an experience of prayer. So every night when plays and tasks and human fellowships have come to an end for the day, she kneels by her child's bed and together they pray. The child repeats 'Now I lay me down to sleep,' or 'Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me,' and with it the wishes of his love for others. There is a moment of pure unselfishness, a moment of indefinable peace. The mother feels an invisible companionship which she makes no attempt to explain. The child catches the feeling from the mother and shares it without understanding it. He wishes to do what mother does, to share his mother's 'Quiet Hour.' He prays—he believes in the life because he possesses it."

"This last sentence—He believes in the life because he possesses it—suggests the truth that we need to realize and to apply in Sunday-school," comments Miss Frederica Beard. "Belief follows action; doing leads to faith. We wish our children to grow into an experience of prayer. Herein lies the value of an habitual time and form of prayer."

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE COURAGE OF FAITH

Beginning the Lesson

It is interesting to compare three stories of loyalty to God in the face of death: that of Daniel's three friends who were cast into the fiery furnace, chapter three of

Daniel; of Daniel himself in our lesson of today; and of the soldiers of Antiochus Epiphanes as told in Second Maccabees. This is the third story: "They set the battle in array against the Jews on the Sabbath day. And they said, 'Come forth and do according to the word of the king, and ye shall live.' And they said, 'We will not come forth, neither will we do the word of the king, to profane the Sabbath day.' And they hasted to give them battle. And they answered them not, neither cast they a stone at them, saying, 'Let us die in our innocency.' And they rose up against them in battle on the Sabbath, and they died, they and their wives and children." These soldiers of Antiochus preferred to die rather than break the Sabbath. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had been willing to die rather than bow down to an image, and Daniel had been willing to die rather than give up his daily prayers. It was these stories of the great steadfastness of Daniel and of his friends which inspired the Jews in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes to remain loyal to God in the face of persecution and death.

Faith Transcended Fear

Daniel was a Puritan. He lived a long way from Plymouth Rock; he had been dead for two thousand years when that compact was signed in the cabin of the Mayflower. He had never read a line of John Milton; he knew nothing about Oliver Cromwell. But he was a Puritan none the less. He insisted upon the rights of the individual conscience as against the dictates of arbitrary authority. Let King Darius publish his decree! Let the princes and presidents insist that the laws of the Medes and Persians alter not! Let them utter their threat about the den of lions! This ancient Puritan will stand for the right as God gives him to see the right, taking all the risks involved. He will stake his all upon fidelity to duty, and trust to the march of events to justify the wisdom of his course. When you find that spirit in any land or age you find the Puritan.

His enemies had it in writing that if he offered his prayer he would be eaten by the lions. Poor, deluded, short-sighted mortals, that was all they knew! Daniel himself did not know what the outcome might be—he went like Abraham of old, not knowing whither he went. It was another instance where moral faith transcended the considerations of expediency. The man who walks in the light true to the highest he sees, keeping his life faced toward the great right things of justice, mercy and truth, walks in safety. Yea, though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death, he fears no evil, for God is with him. Facing his life steadily upon righteousness he knows that nothing can permanently defeat him!—Charles R. Brown, in The Quest of Life.

The Right Frontage in Life

When this young man in Babylon went into his room and knelt in prayer—"his windows open toward Jerusalem"—he gave his life another sort of frontage than that furnished by the streets of Babylon. He faced his soul upon the highest—there before the eyes of his moral imagination was the city of God.

With that open window clearly in view, let me speak to you about the importance of giving every life the right sort of frontage. The young man in Babylon gave his daily life a spiritual outlook. It was five hundred miles in an air line from Daniel's window to Jerusalem. But there are distances which are not measured in miles. When he looked through the open window in the attitude of prayer, Jerusalem, with all it stood for, was within arm's length. He reached forth and was lifted by it to a higher level of thought and feeling. The One who is not far from any one of us brought that praying man into a sense of august fellowship with himself, into the joy of personal participation in the accomplishment of a regal purpose.

"Spiritual frontage," Francis G. Peabody called it in speaking to Harvard men. The inner life demands it for its own self-realization. If the soul looks out upon nothing better than the streets of Babylon, rich and gay though they may be; if the mind reads only the newspaper and hears only the talk which reflects the sentiments of Babylon; if the heart finds its chief pleasure in places of light amusement or in the more frivolous forms of social contact; if the inmost nature never rises above the smoke and soot of these commonplace pursuits, then inevitably the best that is in a man grows small, thin and anæmic. If he prizes moral vigor, stamina and endurance he must have the windows of his life open continually upon the superb sources of strength.

Here is a young man who has come up to the city of New York to study or to work out for himself a business career. He may feel that he is in Babylon. He sees

the wealth and the power of this mighty city. He sees the social gaiety and the alluring temptation. He is separated from those he loves and from the wholesome restraints of home. He has no one to ask him how he spends his evenings.

He is tempted to change the clean, honest habits of his youth and to lower those standards which he was taught to hold high. He is tempted to sacrifice principle to pleasure and to follow the line of least resistance because it will save him the effort involved in maintaining his spiritual ascent. You may spell his particular temptation in all sorts of ways, but it all comes to this—it is the everlasting temptation to let go the higher ideals of Jerusalem and to make himself comfortably at home in the lower wards of Babylon. In that hour he needs the steadying influence of the "spiritual frontage" suggested by the open window. He needs the moral oxygen of those Judean hills blowing in upon him like a tonic infusion of blood and iron.—Condensed from The Quest of Life, by Charles R. Brown.

Is he Safe who Puts his Trust in Jehovah?

"Whosoever putteth his trust in Jehovah shall be safe," the Book of Proverbs affirms. What meaning has here the word *safe?* Does it mean that one who trusts God will never be harmed, never suffer calamity? Assuredly not. Does it mean that one who trusts God will suffer less than one who does not trust him? Rather is it true that the best men suffer more and the worst men suffer less, for the best men have the greater capacity for suffering. It means what Socrates meant when he said, "Know this of a surety that no evil can happen to a good man either in this life or after death." Burdens and trouble and sorrow and suffering are the lot of the Christian, from these is he not kept, but by them he is disciplined, not overcome, in them he is safe, and in God's good plan for him they are not an evil, they work together for good.

"How do you keep so calm under heavy burdens?" Mr. Gladstone was once asked. "That is the secret," he answered, pointing to a framed Scripture text which faced him at every morning's awakening. The text ran, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth thee."

Be not Pliant and Flabby

A sense of duty to God will save a man from weakness, will breed in him the iron nerve and steadfast courage and the endurance which is the crowning quality of great hearts. Unless there be in a man's life a sense of duty which makes certain things necessary, things that he ought to do and must do, and certain things that he must refuse and will refuse at all costs, how can he escape being weak and wavering? He is the fit mark for any sudden and swift temptation. Unless a man can take his stand upon right and stiffen his neck against temptation to desert it, how can he expect to avoid open shame somewhere? Without it you are the victims, never the masters of your fate. Till you have some courage of conviction, refusing to follow even a multitude to do evil, till you know the bit and bridle and spur of duty, going its way and not your own way, you are useless for the world's best ends. Till you have learned to say No, everlasting No, on some subjects; No, everlasting No, to some enticements, you have not begun to live as a moral being. There is nothing that our young men and women need more today than this courage, which adds a hard fiber to conscience, and gives stability to character. We are too pliant and flexible and flabby, too easily cowed into giving up principles, too easily moved by a sneer, too easily browbeaten by a majority, too timid in following our own best instincts. The sense of duty, paramount and supreme, seems weakened in our midst.

Duty cannot be maintained as an inviolate rule of life without moral courage; and courage cannot be maintained without consecration. Thus it is religion which preserves sacredness to human duty. It is the inspiring fount of noble endeavor. When a man is consumed with the desire to please God, he is long past the mere desire to please self. When the heart is fixed, the feet naturally take the path of God's commandments.—Hugh Black in Listening to God.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The story as a study in jealousy. Is Dr. J. D. Jones right in his assertion that there is always possible murder at the heart of envy?

2. The value of a place and a time for prayer.

3. The effect of worry upon sleep.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What had Jeremiah prophesied about the return? (Jer. 29.10.) 2. What prophet mentions Cyrus in connection with the return? (Is. 44.28.) 3. Why did Cyrus permit the exiles to return? 4. How does God "stir up the spirit" of men today? 5. How may Cyrus' words in verse 2 be explained? 6. Why did not all return? 7. What became of the descendants of the exiles who remained in Babylonia? 8. What good did the exile do the Jews? 9. Explain Psalm 126.

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

THE MEANING OF TRUE COURAGE

Beginning the Lesson

What is said about Daniel in the third verse of our chapter? A little girl was once reading this verse, and instead of saying, "an excellent spirit was in him," she said, "An excellent spine was in him." Her reading was true, for certainly Daniel was a man of "firm backbone," as we say; no one could tempt him to be untrue to his principles. How did he first prove this, as told in the first chapter of Daniel?

The story of Daniel in the lions' den is one that you learned and loved as a little child. Who will tell it?

Does One's Attitude in Prayer Matter?

In one of Theodore Roosevelt's letters to his children he speaks of seeing Archie lying prone upon his bed and saying his prayers while Marie, the nurse, was kneeling at the bedside. Archie had met with a mishap and could not kneel, and the nurse was kneeling for him!

Does one's attitude in prayer matter? The reverential posture as well as the reverential words is a part of our worship. In the case of Daniel had he lain upon his bed and prayed he would have seemed to his enemies to have denied his Lord, to have given up his religion, and he would have lost his influence as a worshiper of the true God.

You remember how in Tom Brown's School Days a new boy entered the school one day. The first night he looked around the big sleeping room with its twelve occupants and then bravely dropped on his knees and prayed before them all. Two or three boys laughed and sneered, and one threw a slipper at the kneeling boy, calling him "a sniveling young sham." Tom promptly threw his boot at the young bully; tumult was quieted by the entrance of the verger who put out the lights. Tom could not sleep. He thought of his mother and the promise he had made her that he would never forget at night to kneel by his bedside and pray. Then he thought of how he had broken that promise. The first few nights after coming to the school he found that the other boys did not pray, and he had waited till the lights were out and then he stole out of bed to say his prayers when no one could see him. Then he began to think that he might as well say his prayers in bed, and then that it didn't matter whether he was kneeling or sitting or lying down. And next it came to pass that for the last year he had not prayed at all.

Poor fourteen-year-old Tom! "The first and bitterest feeling was the sense of his own cowardice. He had lied to his mother, to his conscience, to his God. And then the poor little weak boy had done what he, braggart as he was, dared not do. He resolved to write home and tell his mother what a coward her son had been. And then peace came to him as he resolved to bear his testimony next morning. The morning would be harder than the night to begin with, but he felt that he could not afford to let one chance slip. Several times he faltered, for the devil showed him, first, all his old friends calling him 'Saint' and 'Square-toes,' and a dozen other hard names: and then came the more subtle temptation: 'Have I any right to begin it now? Ought I not rather to pray in my own study, letting other boys know that I do so, and trying to lead them to it, while in public, at least, I should go on as I have done?' But he resolved to follow the right impulse."

Next morning in the face of the whole room he knelt down to pray, and rose from his knees comforted and ready to face the whole world. It was not needed: two other boys besides Arthur had already followed his example, and he went down to the great school with a glimmering of another lesson in his heart—the lesson that he who has conquered his own cowardly spirit has conquered the whole outward world.

"Odd Man Out"

The game of "Odd Man Out" has many forms, but it always means that the man who is odd has to go out of the ring and hunt the others, or be hunted by them. He has to stand out from the others and play his part of the game alone, and as the butt and sport of all the rest. It is often hard to work and tries your pluck.

Now, if a boy means to keep a clean heart, and a clean tongue, he must be willing to be "odd man out." Joseph was "odd man out" because he refused to countenance the dirty stories and dirty deeds of his ten brothers. Jonathan was "odd man out" when he took David's side against his own father—King Saul. And Daniel was "odd man out," and went to the lions' den rather than give up praying to God.

Merry-makers at the game of life, play the game well. Follow your great leader—Christ, and never be ashamed to be "odd man out" for him.—Forbes Jackson, in Twilight Tales.

Moral Cowardice

Moral cowardice is originally a weakness rather than a positive sin, and yet it is probably as prolific of sin and even of great crime as any of the more definite and vigorous passions of our nature, such as hate and avarice. It is that weakness which prompts a man to avoid difficulties, to escape everything rough and disagreeable, to yield to circumstances, and which, above all, makes him incapable of facing the reproach, contempt, or opposition of his fellow men. It is often found in combination with much amiability of character.

The schoolboy, fearing his parents' disappointment, says he stands higher in his class than he does; or fearing to be thought soft and unmanly by his school fellows, sees cruelty or a cheat or some wickedness perpetrated without a word of honest anger or manly condemnation. All this is moral cowardice.

We are apt to say that Pilate was weak rather than wicked, forgetting that moral weakness is just another name for wickedness, or rather is that which makes a man capable of any wickedness. The man we call wicked has his one or two good points at which we can be sure of him. The weak man we are never sure of. That he has good feelings is nothing, for we do not know what may be brought to overcome these feelings.—Marcus Dods.

The Secret of Escape from Trouble

I met God in the morning,
When my day was at its best;
And His Presence came like sunrise
With a glory in my breast.

All day long the Presence lingered,
All day long He stayed with me;
And we sailed in perfect calmness
O'er a very troubled sea.

Other ships were blown and battered,
Other ships were sore distressed;
But the winds that seemed to drive them,
Brought to us both peace and rest.

Then I thought of other mornings,
With a keen remorse of mind,
When I, too, had loosed the moorings,
With the Presence left behind.

So I think I know the secret,
Learned from many a troubled way;
You must seek Him in the morning,
If you want Him through the day.—Ralph Cushman.

Sentence Sermons

Prayer has an "hour," it has a place, in our life; it is no more to be crowded out than the most vital practice of receiving one's daily food.—C. C. Hall.

When obstacles and trials seem
Like prison walls to be,
I do the little I can do,
And leave the rest to thee.—F. W. Faber.

LESSON VII—AUGUST 18

THE RETURN FROM CAPTIVITY

GOLDEN TEXT: Jehovah hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Psalm 126.3

LESSON Jeremiah 29.10-14; Ezra 1.1-11; Psalm 126.1-6

DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 124

EZRA 1.1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, 2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Jehovah, the God of Israel (he is God), which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

5 Then rose up the heads of fathers' *houses* of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of Jehovah which is in Jerusalem. 6 And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

PSALM 126.1 When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion,
We were like unto them that dream.
2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the nations,
Jehovah hath done great things for them.
3 Jehovah hath done great things for us,
Whereof we are glad.
4 Turn again our captivity, O Jehovah,
As the streams in the South.
5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE PROCLAMATION OF CYRUS, Ezra 1.1-4. Cyrus is called king of Persia because he was of Persian descent and Persia was the most important of his conquests: originally king only of Elam, he conquered Media, Persia, Lydia and then Babylonia. It was in the first year of his reign in Babylonia that God stirred up his spirit to the gracious thought of allowing the exiled Jews to return to their own land. Cyrus' own ulterior motive was, no doubt, to secure the gratitude of the Jews and to build up in Judea a friendly buffer nation between himself and the Egyptian power.

"The divine energy does not work apart from, but within, those ordinary mental processes which have to do with the actions of men."

Cyrus was thus inspired by God, the record reads, "that the word of Jehovah by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished." In Jeremiah 29.10 we read: "For thus saith Jehovah, After seventy years are accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." The time limit, seventy, is to be regarded, of course, as a round number. From the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. to the return in 538 B.C. was forty-eight years. (Seventy years intervened between the destruction of the temple and its restoration in 516 B.C.) "We are not to think that the Lord just arbitrarily made good the prophecy of Jeremiah simply to make Jeremiah's prophecy true. There is deeper reason underlying God's dealings than this. The very firmness of Jeremiah's conviction that God would restore his nation helped to bring about a situation favorable to that restoration—helped keep alive in other hearts the expectation of a glorious return. The Almighty seems to make his activities in part depend upon the expectations of his people, and this is only to say that the Lord is dependent upon a spirit of faith in the hearts of his followers" (F. J. McConnell).

"There is a Hand that bends our deeds
To mightier issues than we planned" (Richard Hovey).

"The truth of God working through the personality of man has been the

salvation of the world. Increase the personality and you increase the power" (Phillips Brooks).

By heralds and by written official documents Cyrus sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom—as far as Media, Josephus adds. It was his policy to claim the favor of the gods of every people, and he began his proclamation thus: "All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah" (see Ezra 6.3-5). "For an outsider he came to a wonderfully sure understanding of the sort of justice that would be pleasing to the Lord of the Jews" (F. J. McConnell). The desire of the Jews to return was religious rather than patriotic: the restoration of the temple was their main object. Cyrus did not order their return, he merely decreed that they might return and build the house of Jehovah. And he further decreed that the native Babylonians as well as the Jews who remained should help the returning Jews with silver and gold and with goods and with beasts, as well as with voluntary gifts for the temple.

Dr. Watkinson uses for another purpose an illustration which is pertinent here. In the valley of Chamouni at the foot of Mount Blanc there is a notable monument. It represents two figures, the splendid representation of Saussure, and by his side the image of Balmat, the guide. Saussure was a great thinker; Balmat was a poor peasant. But Saussure would never have scaled Mount Blanc if Balmat had not shown him the way. So the people, with a fine instinct, put them both on the monument—the great philosopher and the little peasant—for together they gave to mankind a new world of science and romance. The obscure helper does not often get on the monument, but he deserves the position.

II. THE RESPONSE TO THE PROCLAMATION, Ezra 1.5-11. The majority of the Jews preferred to remain in the land of their exile, but the hereditary rulers of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (some also from Ephraim and Manasseh, 1 Ch. 9.3) prepared to depart, and their neighbors strengthened their hands with gifts, as Cyrus had directed. How history is being repeated today in the Zionist movement!

In the reigns of Jehoiakim (2 Ch. 36.7), and of Jehoiachin (2 K. 24.13) and of Zedekiah (2 K. 25.13), the sacred vessels of the temple had been carried off to Babylon. These Cyrus now returned, having them given into the hands of Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah, the court name, it is believed, for Zerubbabel. The foundation of the temple is ascribed to both, Ezra 3.8; 5.16. Some authorities think, however, that he was a son of Jehoiachin and uncle of Zerubbabel. There were five thousand and four hundred vessels of gold and silver. Those mentioned in the omitted verses total 2499: whether some were omitted from the itemized list, or whether some of the figures were wrongly copied, does not matter. "Is not this dry enumeration a strange item to come in the forefront of the narrative of such an event? We might have expected some kind of reproduction of the enthusiasm of the returning exiles, some account of how they were sent on their journey, something which we should have felt worthier of the occasion than a list of bowls and nine and twenty knives. But it is of a piece with the whole of the first part of this Book of Ezra, which is mostly taken up with a similar catalogue of the members of the expedition. The list here indicates the pride and joy with which the long hidden and often desecrated vessels were received. We can see the priests and Levites gazing at them as they were brought forth, their hearts, and perhaps their eyes, filling with sacred memories. The Lord had 'turned again the captivity of Zion,' and these sacred vessels lay there, glittering before them, to assure them that they were not as 'them that dream' " (Alexander Maclaren).

"Small things become great when they are the witnesses of a great thing."

III. THE JOY OVER THE RETURN, Psalm 126.1-3. Our first feeling at the return was one of dazed bewilderment; it seemed incredible, too good to be true, and but a dream. Sudden joy or sorrow often have this stupefying effect. "Polybius and Livy use similar language to describe the joy and astonishment of the Greeks when, after the conquest of Macedonia by T. Quinctius Flaminus in B.C. 196, the freedom of Greece was proclaimed at the Isthmian games. "None could believe," wrote Livy, "that he had really heard aright; men looked at one another in astonishment as if it were the empty illusion of a dream; distrusting the

testimony of his own ears, each began to question his neighbor" (A. F. Kirkpatrick). When the moment of full realization came, we broke out into songs and laughter, our joy was full.

The nations round about said, "Jehovah hath done great things for them." We realize that what they said is true, and joyously we re-echo the words as our own conviction, Jehovah hath indeed done great things for us.

"No human being hath devised nor hath any human mind worked out these great things: they are the gracious gifts of the most high God, who while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy" (Lincoln).

IV. PRAYER AND HOPE FOR A RENEWAL OF PROSPERITY, Ps. 126.4-6. Turn again our captivity, O Jehovah, as the streams in the South. The dry water courses of the streams in the arid country south of Judea become rushing torrents after a heavy rain. "The sequel had been disappointing; and the restored community had need to pray that Jehovah would carry on and complete the work which he had begun. Thus far the restoration of Israel had been only, as it were, a scanty thread of water trickling among the stones, but as in the due season Jehovah refills those stony beds with abundance of sparkling, rushing water, so he can reanimate the feeble community of Israel with vigorous life, and multiply its scant numbers into the crowds which the prophet's vision, Is. 49.18, saw streaming to Jerusalem" (A. F. Kirkpatrick).

"Would that to our hearts and churches might come abundant life, as when the snows melt in the springtime and flush the brooks!" (F. B. Meyer).

The Psalmist does not doubt that seed sown in tears would produce a joyful harvest, even feeble efforts would bear fruit. Compare Jn. 16.20. Sowing and reaping have always symbolized the beginning and end of an undertaking. He that goes on his way weeping as he carries the seed for sowing shall surely return with sheaves and shouts of joy.

What countless multitudes have these words encouraged and cheered! All through the ages they have enabled men to persevere in their work for God in the face of tremendous discouragements.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of heaven, given me, Ezra 1.2. Cyrus was the worshiper of many gods; he was ready to worship Jehovah the God of the Jews just as he was to worship the many gods of the Babylonians. His special god was Marduk, as his cylinder inscription shows. Here is the translation: "Marduk, the great god of the Babylonians, searched through all lands, he saw him, and he sought the righteous prince after his own heart, whom he took by the hand. Cyrus, king of Anshan, he called by name to sovereignty over the whole world he appointed him. . . . May all the gods whom I brought into their own cities daily before Bel and Nabu pray that I may have a long life, may they speak a gracious word for me, and may they say to Marduk, my lord, 'Cyrus, the king who worships thee, and Cambyses his son.'"

He hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, Ezra 1.2. As discovery of papyri on the island of Elephantine opposite the town of Assuan in Egypt proves, at the time of the events of this lesson there was a Jewish colony settled there whose temple was destroyed by the Egyptians. A letter of 408 B.C. beginning: "To our master Bagoas, governor of the Jews. Thy servants Jedoniah and associates, priests in the city of Elephantine"—ask help in these words: "If our master thinketh well to build this temple seeing they permit us not to build it, lo, unto thy friends and clients which are here in Egypt let a letter be sent from thee concerning the temple of the God Jahu (Jehovah) in the city of Elephantine to build it even as it was before." Another papyrus contains the answer of Bagoas: "Thou shalt say in Egypt before Arsames (the governor) concerning the altar-house of the God of Heaven, which was built before our time, before Cambyses in Elephantine, which Vidrang . . . destroyed in the fourteenth year of King Darius, that it is to be rebuilt in its place as it was before, and that meat-offerings and frankincense shall be offered upon this altar, as was done formerly."

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him, Ps. 126.6. Many of the people are ground down by the Government, and are so poor that they live at the best of times from hand to mouth; and "in seasons of great scarcity, they part in sorrow and anxiety with every measure of precious seed cast into the ground, for it is like taking bread out of the mouths of their starving children, and bitter tears at such times are shed." In allusion to these sadly familiar scenes in the Holy Land, the Psalmist speaks of those "that sow in tears"; and represents them as sustained during this trial by the anticipated joy of harvest; for "They shall reap with triumphant singing (*rinnah*). . . . He shall surely come in with triumphant singing (*rinnah*) bearing his sheaves." I think there is every reason to believe that this *rinnah* is that mode of rejoicing when for a long time they go on singing in chorus: *"Hey aman, 'Allah Aman; hey aman, ouroodo kaman,"* "O amen, God is amen; O amen, and repeat it again," to the accompaniment of a rhythmic clapping of hands, a characteristic oriental feature of great rejoicing. (Ps. 126.5, 6.)—James Neil, in Everyday Life in the Holy Land.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The History of Babylonia from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus

See page 263.

Why All the Exiles Did not Return to Their Homeland

Jeremiah (Jer. 29.1-20) counseled the first exiles to identify themselves with the interests of their new country, to settle down into orderly and industrious lives. They followed his advice. "The peculiar genius for trade, which the Jews have manifested ever since," writes Professor Kent, "was probably first developed amidst the favoring conditions which surrounded them in the land of the two rivers. In contract tablets found at Nippur, and dating from the earlier part of the Persian period, many familiar Old Testament names recur, showing that by that time the Jews had been drawn into the streams of trade which flowed so strongly to and from Babylon."

The return to Jerusalem meant a long, hard journey; it meant, moreover, that the Jews must give up their houses and their business for a dreary spot in the home-land, must exchange the rich, well-watered gardens of Babylon for the barren Judean hills and an uncertain existence in Jerusalem. It required great hardihood as well as deep religious feeling to accept Cyrus' permission to pull up stakes and return. For the sake of rebuilding the temple the most devout among the Jews did return. The greater part remained.

The Jews who Remained and their Descendants

They increased in numbers and flourished. They established schools; they studied and revised their laws; they collected their traditions with greater zeal than ever before, and added new books to their literature. Occasionally, with the wealth which they accumulated, they performed the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and while on the way bewailed their exile, more as a matter of custom than of heart.

During the first century of our era, two Jewish brothers—Asinai and Anilai—the leaders of a large Jewish community at Neherda, north of Babylon, became powerful, and with a bravery displayed a few centuries earlier by the Maccabees, established an independent Jewish state. There the chief of the captives resided, and thither the Jews, still mourning the exile from which they would not return, flocked for consolation and advice.

The descendants of the exiles still inhabit every part of Babylonia. Of the one hundred thousand population of Bagdad, forty thousand are Jews. In the town of Hillah, upon the site of Babylon, there are probably as many Jews as Arabs. In the sacred cities of Meshed, places almost inaccessible to the non-Moslem, are now a few Jewish families. In the malarial marshes of lower Mesopotamia, far from other habitation, I have found Jewish families living alone, cultivating their rice-fields as in the days of the exile. In general, the modern Bagdad Jew, ground down by oppression, is an ignorant, loathsome creature. While forgetting much of the good of his own religion and traditions, he has adopted much of the superstition of the Arabs.—Edgar James Banks.

The Situation in Judah during the Exile

The Samaritans pushed southward. The Edomites drew in upon the Negeb. Ammonites and Moabites doubtless took their shares; and the desert nomads, always

hovering upon the borders of cultivation and even in times of peace encamped across its pastures, would take advantage of the exile to settle down in deserted fields and buildings. Yet the fact persists, that upon a much diminished territory some scores of thousands of Jews remained in Judah through all the period of the exile. They were "the poorest of the land," from whom every man of substance and of energy had been sifted; mere groups of peasants without a leader and without a center; disorganized and an easy prey to the heathenism by which they were surrounded. We can appreciate the silence which reigns in the Bible regarding them, and which has misled us as to their numbers. They were a negligible quantity in the religious future of Israel: without initiative or any influence except that of a dead weight upon the efforts of the rebuilders of the nation when these at last returned from Babylonia.—George Adam Smith, in Jerusalem.

The Route of Those who Returned

The great caravan would scarcely take the direct route across the desert to Damascus. They probably traveled up the Euphrates River Valley, along the route which was afterwards called "The Royal Road," up to the ancient city of Haran, Abraham's resting-place, and then westward across the river at the ford of Carchemish. From there they went southward by the way of Aleppo and Hamath to Damascus and on till they reached the ruined city of Jerusalem. See the two routes indicated on our large colored map. The similar journey of Ezra's caravan required four months, as we know from Ezra 7.8, 9.

After the Return from Babylon

Two generations of Jews in exile had dreamed of the return. Jerusalem and the land had appeared to them glorified, the life had been idealized. The pioneers of the return were disillusioned; they found desolation everywhere, the land was barren, Jerusalem was in ruins, the neighboring people were hostile. Those early days were days of intense discouragement which threatened to overwhelm them.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

When he wrote the words of Psalm 126.6, the Psalmist himself could have little realized the accumulation of sheaves that would spring from his seed-sowing. The teacher as a sower of seed may not always see the harvest, but he may confidently expect that his sowing will not be in vain. And he will have greater joy in the sowing, if he has learned to do it well. Much of the unhappiness of teaching is due to the teacher's own consciousness of not doing it well. In the words of Bishop McDonell: "Here is the way out. Your joy in your work would be immensely increased if by better preparation you were enabled to do your work better. By every means learn, for the Master's sake, to do it well. The Master of all good work will then reward you with the joy of doing it happily."

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RETURN

Beginning the Lesson

What was Cyrus' motive in allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple? It was part of his policy as king. His predecessors on the throne of Babylon had deemed it wise to deport conquered people to Babylonia and fill their places with imported people. Cyrus deemed the opposite plan a wise one, and he gained the good will of his subjects by his generous dealings with them. Moreover, though he had made himself master of Western Asia, he still had the conquest of Egypt in view. And as he was far-sighted he must have recognized that a grateful people dwelling in Judea, the province bordering on Egypt, and the one which must be the basis of a campaign against the land of the Pharaohs, would be of great service to him.

How, then, can the historian say that Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Cyrus? "The historian digs deeper to find the true cause," Dr. Maclaren answers. "Cyrus was God's instrument, and the statesman's insight was the result of God's illumination. The divine causality moves men when they move themselves. It was not only in the history of the chosen people that God's purpose was wrought out by more or less conscious and willing instruments. The principle laid down by the writer of

the Book of Ezra is of universal application, and the true philosophy of history must recognize as underlying all other so-called causes and forces the one uncaused Cause, of whose purposes kings and politicians are the executants, even while they freely act according to their own judgments, and, it may be, in utter unconsciousness of him. It concerns our tranquillity and hopefulness, in the bewildering maze and often heart-breaking tragedy of mundane affairs, to hold fast by the conviction that God's unseen hand moves the pieces on the board and presides over all the complications."

What the Exile Effected

The exile was a blessing considerably disguised at first, but in the end gratefully acknowledged. It was a nation that was carried into captivity, but a Church that returned; the Jewish Church took the place of the Hebrew People. When they went into exile, the great majority could scarcely be distinguished from their heathen neighbors. They were indeed sifted during the exile, and those who returned were passionately loyal to Jehovah. As Dr. Maclaren expresses it, colors burned in on china are permanent, and the furnace of bondage had, at least, effected this, that it fixed monotheism forever in the inmost substance of the Jewish people.

Symbolic Figure of Cyrus
At the base is his name in cuneiform characters

The exile effected more. The people who returned were under the guidance of priests, and they went back for the express purpose of rebuilding the temple and restoring worship there in accordance with their ritual. They acknowledged that the sins of their nation had merited the punishment of exile, and they eagerly desired reconciliation with Jehovah. "They went out without a national knowledge of the Law, and they returned with a passion for the Law which redeems the commonplaces of their life with vast sublimities."

Moreover, their conception of Jehovah was different on their return. Where formerly they had thought of him mainly as the God of Israel, the God of Canaan alone, they now knew him to be God of the universe. Professor Kent explains this: "Absorbed among races more powerful and more highly civilized than they, the Jews were forced to admit that they were only one of the weak families of the earth. The experience was painful but valuable. It not only broadened their conception of Jehovah's character, but also led them to recognize their complete dependence upon him. They saw for the first time that they were unique among nations simply because of their unique relation to the God of the universe. Their attitude changed toward the great heathen world about them. No longer could they ignore their neighbors, or merely consider them when they disturbed the peace of Israel. Beginning with the period of the exile, the nations figure prominently in the utterances of the prophets. From the same epoch dates the rise of a broad religious philosophy of history. The nations, drawn together by force, began dimly to recognize that they belonged to one family; while certain inspired Jews grasped the greater truth that one Father stood at the head of that family, and that Cyrus was Jehovah's anointed as truly as was Jehoiachin. The exile proved, as Amos predicted (Am. 9.9), a sifting process, for it effectually separated the faint-hearted and sceptical from the brave and true. Many—perhaps the majority—were found wanting; but those who endured the ordeal and remained faithful were devoted to the worship of the Jehovah of the prophets with a passionate zeal, which was in striking contrast to the popular indifference that daunted pre-exilic prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah. Bound together, not by political bands, but by common suffering and the common faith, the royal few proved the nucleus out of which, during the succeeding centuries, grew the Jewish church."

The Power is in God

It would greatly simplify matters if we could get hold of the idea that spiritual power is no other than the will of God streaming into us and becoming our will. All through the ages this Eternal Will has streamed into institutions and personalities. Now it has flashed out in prophetic illumination, now become the mover in some epoch-making reformation and now in some great religious awakening. Society has been lifted and purified just in proportion as it has opened itself to this stream of the divine purpose. Every improvement in social conditions, every movement to elevate and save the masses, every endeavor to Christianize the heathen, every step of progress toward the brotherhood of man, has been caused by the instreaming of the will of God. These things are done by the push of the very forces that rule in the heart of the Eternal Father.

Go, for example, into a great mill or factory. At one end are the large engine and driving wheel. At the other end are scores, perhaps hundreds, of machines standing still. There is no lack of power in the engine, and no lack of willingness in the engineer to pass it along to the factory, but still the machines are motionless. What is the matter? Simply this: the great belt which transmits the power from the engine to the factory has not been slipped on. Let that be attended to and immediately every wheel begins to turn and something is done. Now spiritual power, as I understand it, is simply bolting my will on to the will of God. The man who does that most completely, who keeps the belt most tight so that the power lost through transmission is reduced to the minimum, is always the mightiest spiritual force. Most of us are weak because the belt is either off altogether, or so slack and loose that it carries very little of the power of the engine over into the factory.—Robert F. Coyle, in The Church and the Times.

The Return of the Jews to Palestine Today

There is no sign that many of the million and a half Jews in the City of New York have the slightest desire to return to Palestine, but all are rejoicing that theirs is no longer "a race without a country." Mr. Frederick Lynch, in reviewing a book by James Waterman Wise, makes these comments:

The Jew thrills to the thought that he has a mother country as well as a mother race. After almost two thousand years of Jewish exile, Palestine is once more to become the central point of Jewish interest, of Jewish effort, of Jewish inspiration. It is to become again a central national home for a roving spiritual ideal. Already the Jews of all the world are pouring their money into the new state, building a great university, establishing industries and farms. More and more Palestine is the focus of their thoughts, their central interest, the bond of unity. The consciousness that in her part of the world at least there is a Jewish way of life, that there does exist a people the essence of whose lives is as distinctively Jewish as that of his neighbors is distinctly Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon, cannot but affect the Jew everywhere. The Jews will feel their oneness, not only with a hallowed and sacred religious memory, but with a glorious and valiant spiritual adventure. The fact of a Jewish life in Palestine will lend a new dignity to the position of the Jew in every land.

Exiles in America

Exiles from many a land have found America the haven of their hopes. It cannot be denied, however, that the process of amalgamation has gotten woefully behind. And it cannot be denied that a good many men and women and little children have seen on the face of America an expression cold and indifferent with no warming quality of sympathy. That there are real and definite problems connected with the vast masses of unassimilated folk in America cannot be denied. But we must never forget that this defines the very terms of the problem. The twentieth century must achieve assimilation. It must achieve co-ordination. It must be the century when we make friends with ourselves.

We must constantly realize that in every race and in every natural group to be found in our land there are men of the noblest good will and of the eagerest desire for sound and brotherly character. They come with sore hearts, many of the new arrivals. But masses of them come with souls all ready to kindle and to flame with every noble impulse and every high conception of responsible and effective and gracious living. We are to learn to think of the great group of hearty good will, not in the terms of their past national or racial relationships, but in the terms of their American spirit and their dependable character. The man who meets one

of them with averted eyes sins against the very deepest sanction of our national life.

It must be admitted that there are men of bad will and groups of bad will in America. The ancestors of some of them came over in the Mayflower. The ancestors of some of them came from Northern Europe. Some of them have memories of Eastern Europe and some of them represent the tradition of Southern Europe. They belong to every class, every social and intellectual type, to every color and every race. They must be dealt with in such a way as to conserve the best interests of the Republic.

And here some impossible principles must be observed. A man is not to be opposed always because he is a man of bad will, and never because he is a member of any particular racial and national group. There is no place in America for race hatred nor religious hatred.

In regard to the men of bad will there must be a scientific study of the environment out of which they have come and of the economic and social forces which have played upon them. Sometimes an understanding of their history is an understanding of the method by which a remedy may be applied. Thus it comes to pass that out of the group of bad will, men and women are won to a new purpose and brought within the influence of the friendly face. To be sure, there are those who cannot be so reached, and it is necessary to deal with them in steady and strong fashion.

With this spirit America can meet its requirement of making friends with itself. The great faiths of the nation have a common foundation in the belief in a personal God, a belief in the moral law, a belief in brotherhood, and a belief in immortality. Those form a notable basis of religious inspiration which they can share. So the men of good will of all the groups can stand together against the sordid and sinister forces which are a menace to us all.—Condensed from A Little Book of Sermons, by Lynn Harold Hough.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Zionism.

2. Almighty God has his plans and methods for human progress.—William McKinley.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. How many temples occupied the same site, what was each called, and by whom was each destroyed? 2. What is the building now upon the site of the temple called? (Mosque of Omar.) 3. Why did Zerubbabel refuse the help of the Samaritans in rebuilding the temple? 4. Was his refusal right, or wrong? 5. What did the temple do for Jerusalem? 6. What do our churches do for our city? 7. Is it advisable to build magnificent churches or cathedrals today? 8. How should money be raised for the erection and maintenance of the church building? 9. How should the proper amount for a church building be determined?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

MAKING A FRESH START

Beginning the Lesson

Question pupils about the release of the Hebrews from the captivity in Egypt, and bring out the trouble they had in getting away from Pharaoh. Recall how they "asked of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment, and Jehovah gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked." Then with that exodus contrast this one of the Jews from the captivity in Babylon, with the freely granted permission of Cyrus the king, his wide-spread proclamation, his bidding the people help those who returned with silver and gold and goods and beasts as well as free-will offerings for the temple. Continue with Explanations and Comments.

The Cry of the Exiles in Babylon

For forty-eight years after the capture of Jerusalem the Jews lived in the land of their conqueror, but they never ceased to bewail their native land. The sorrows of the exiles in Babylon are told in the 137th Psalm:

By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,

Let my right hand forget her skill,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
If I remember thee not;
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.

It was not God's will that they should stay forever in exile. What had the prophet Jeremiah said was God's purpose for them?

How God Stirs up the Hearts of Men to Do his Will Today

"God is up in heaven and he doesn't care for anybody but himself, but you are right here where I can get at you, and are willing to help poor people like me, and so I have come to you." These are the words of an Italian woman who came to me recently. She was up to her eyes in trouble.

After I had helped her in several material ways, I said to her: "There is a reservoir of water upon the east side and it is all fenced in so that no one can get at it. It seems to care for nothing but itself, but in our house there is a faucet to which you can go at any time and get the water you need. You praise the faucet and condemn the reservoir. You thank the faucet but have no gratitude for the reservoir, until you find that every drop of water that has come through the faucet came from the reservoir. When you find this out, you say, 'I am thankful to both faucet and reservoir, to the reservoir for sending the water, and to the faucet for giving it to me.'"

"Oh," she said, "I know what you mean. You mean you are the faucet, and God is the reservoir; that he put it into your heart to help me."

"Yes," I said, "thank God you have come to understand the exact truth, and now you will be thankful, not so much to me as to God, who through me has granted you a little of the more abundant help that he longs to give. And remember his spirit in me. For God's spirit is in you and in all men."—Condensed from Truths that Save, by Frank H. Decker.

Then Was our Mouth Filled with Laughter

When Dan Crawford reached England after an absence of twenty-five years in the heart of Africa, a member of the cabinet said to him: "I would like your eyes. I would like to experience the surprise that you must be having in seeing the difference between twenty-five years ago and now. What is the biggest thing you have seen in the way of change?"

The missionary's answer must have surprised that cabinet member, for he said: "One of the greatest differences between now and twenty-five years ago that I notice is this: that modern materialism has robbed the modern young man of his smile. When I came into town the other morning in 'the tube,' there were thirteen young English sphinxes before me, with a strained, almost 'struggle-for-life' look on their faces. Twenty-five years ago I would have had before me thirteen genial, joyful Englishmen dissolving in smiles."

When Mr. Crawford told this conversation he compared a smile to the flag that floats over Buckingham Palace. When the flag floats the English people know the king is in the palace, Mr. Crawford's inference being that the continued absence of a smile from the face of the subjects of the King of Kings indicated that the Latter no longer dwells in their hearts. Do you not think that in his mind were these words of our Psalm:

Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the nations,
Jehovah hath done great things for them.

Sentence Sermons

What we need is a profound faith in God's ruling all things.—Gordon.

If any one would tell you the surest way to happiness he must tell you to make it a rule to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you.—William Law.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Why was the rebuilding of the temple so important? 2. Why did the old men weep at the laying of the foundation? 3. Why did the young men shout for joy? 4. What word for amiable, Ps. 84.1, is given in the margin of your Bible?

REBUILDING THE TEMPLE

GOLDEN TEXT: I was glad when they said unto me, let us go unto the house of Jehovah. Psalm 122.1

LESSON Ezra 3.1 to 6.22; Psalm 84.1-12 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 122

EZRA 3.10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Jehovah, after the order of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah, *saying*, For he is good, for his loving kindness *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' *houses*, the old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: 13 so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

EZRA 6.14 And the elders of the Jews builded and prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the decree of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. 15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

16 And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy.

PSALM 84.1 How amiable are thy tabernacles,
O Jehovah of hosts!
2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah;
My heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God.
3 Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.
Even thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts,
My King, and my God.
4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:
They will be still praising thee. Selah.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE ERECTION OF THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERINGS, Ezra 3.1-9. Read The Historical Background. The journey from Babylon must have required many months. The first work undertaken in the homeland was the building of houses and the tilling of ground. But as early as the seventh month after their return the altar of burnt-offerings was rebuilt and there the offerings were sacrificed according to the law of Moses. In the second month of the second year after the return a start was made with the rebuilding of the temple. Money was contributed to pay the masons and carpenters and furnish food and drink and oil to the men of Sidon and Tyre who brought cedar trees from Lebanon to Joppa on the coast, whence they were transported to Jerusalem.

It was the "temple of Jehovah" that they would rebuild. In the village of Fernay, near Geneva, there is a building bearing the Latin inscription, Deo erexit Voltaire, Voltaire built it for God. Voltaire built the church for the use of the people, and though he himself would not worship, he recognised that the church stands for great realities.

II. THE FOUNDATION OF THE TEMPLE LAID, Ezra 3.10, 11. The temple was to the Jews "what the Pyramids were to the Egyptians, the Parthenon to the Greeks, the Coliseum to the Romans, St. Peter's to the Latins—but it was more. It meant to the Jews what the flag means to you, what the cross means to the Christian" (William S. Mitchell). The first temple was the work of King Solomon, and the people had been obliged to supply him with the necessary money and labor. The second temple was the work of the people themselves.

"The more democratic character of this second movement was for the health of Israel. Men receive more help of a permanent sort from that which they do for themselves than from the most elaborate results achieved for them by the generosity of others. The pauperization of spirit which results in any church where some generous millionaire stands ready to relieve the

congregation from the necessity of bearing its own financial burdens is pathetic. The commitment of a great interest to the rank and file may occasion a measure of delay; the earlier stages of the undertaking may sometimes be marred by the blunders of the unskilled; but all this is the price which we gladly pay for the culture of the many in the higher service of life."

While the workmen laid the foundations, the priests in their official robes blew the trumpets, and the Levites sounded the cymbals in praise of the Lord as had been done in the time of David, saying, "For he is good; for his lovingkindness endureth for ever toward Israel." This realization of the goodness and mercy of God runs through Psalms 106, 107, 118 and 136. There were probably two choirs singing alternately. "If the 118th Psalm was originally appropriated to this occasion, it is easy to see with what force the two choral companies must have replied, in strophe and antistrophe: 'Open to me the gates of righteousness'; 'This is the gate through which the righteous shall enter'; or must have welcomed the foundation stone which, after all difficulty and opposition, had at last been raised on the angle of the rocky platform; or have uttered the formula which afterwards (Mt. 21.9) became proverbial for all such popular celebrations—'Hosanna! Save us.' 'Blessed be whosoever cometh in the name of the Eternal'" (Dean Stanley).

"There is a rapture that is unique and infectious in the solemnities of God's house, in its triumphal music and song. It affords an evidence of the divinity of religion that is most affecting, most convincing. The Japanese Letters of Lafcadio Hearn give a striking illustration of this. Hearn was a sensualist of the most pronounced type, a bitter scoffer at religion, one who wished that the missionaries might be shipped off to sea and the vessel scuttled; and yet in a frank moment he confesses to a friend that it is impossible to listen to a congregation singing, 'Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee,' without deep emotion. His heart was wiser than his brains, and bore its witness to the eternal truth" (J. Stuart Holden).

III. MINGLED JOY AND MOURNING, Ezra 3.12, 13. While shouts of joy came from the younger people whose hearts were filled with hope now that the new temple was begun, many of the priests and Levites and others, the old men who had seen Solomon's temple, were overcome and wept loudly, so that one could not distinguish their weeping from the shouting of those who rejoiced. The old men could not refrain from weeping, for they recalled the magnificent temple which had stood there in "the good old days"; and dwelling upon the hardships and poverty of the present, they could not believe it possible for another temple to be at all like the first. "A sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things," as Tennyson tells us.

"It is still true that the same situation inspires some men to shout and others to weep. And on the whole the men who shout have the future on their side. To appreciate the good in the present has more promise than merely to bewail the good which is lost. And after all a man may appreciate the past even while he makes the best of the present. The new temple may not be so glorious as the old, but the worship may be just as deep and just as sincere" (Lynn H. Hough).

"Let the optimism of our anticipation drown the pessimism of retrospection" (F. B. Meyer).

IV. THE OPPOSITION TO THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE, Ezra 4.1 to 6.13. The Israelites of Samaria who had not been deported when the Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians, intermarried with colonists brought there by the eastern conquerors, and adopted much of the heathen beliefs of these colonists. Now these people of low religious standards came and made an unwelcome offer at Jerusalem: "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as ye do," they said. But Zerubbabel and the rest refused. "Ye have nothing to do with us," they said, "to build an house unto our God." Were they justified in their hostile answer and exclusive attitude? Dr. Charles R. Brown answers, Yes. "Every action must be justified by its setting," he reminds us. "The spirit of exclusiveness may be hateful, or it may be the one possible method of preserving a true faith and a worthy mode of life. The course of the British in refusing to intermarry with people of lower standards in the countries they have colonized has proved itself

more beneficial to all concerned than has the easier habit of the Spaniards, who have mingled their blood with that of races cherishing lower ideals and looser social customs. The religion of the Jews was not as yet sufficiently clear-cut in its own development to become as broadly missionary or as hospitably inclusive as would be natural and wholesome at some later stage of its growth. These early devotees were right in guarding against the lowering of standards until the principles for which they stood had become more firmly established."

Then the people of the land put obstacles in the way of the building of the temple, and through hired counselors, who must have misrepresented matters at the Persian Court, they succeeded in preventing the people of Judah from building during the remainder of the reign of Cyrus.

During this time of opposition the Jews were busy making their new houses and restoring the ancient cities, starting farms and constructing roads, and they began to argue that God's time for restoring his house had not yet come. Then

Tomb of Darius

droughts came and crops were bad, tokens of God's displeasure, they believed, and the preaching of their prophets Haggai and Zechariah aroused them from their indifference. "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your own ceiled houses, while this temple lies in ruins?" questioned Haggai. "And Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and the spirit of the rest of the people, so that they came and worked on the temple of Jehovah." Persian officials of the Province beyond the River inquired by what authority the Jews were rebuilding the temple and the walls of the city, but the work went on while these officials sent a report of the work to Darius and awaited an answer. After Darius had investigated the archives and found a record of the decree of Cyrus, he ordered these Persian officers to aid in the building of the temple.

V. THE COMPLETION AND DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE, Ezra 6.14-16. At last, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius, according to the decree of Cyrus (539-529 B.C.) and Darius (521-485 B.C.) and Artaxerxes, King of Persia (464-424 B.C.), the temple was finished. Artaxerxes could not have aided in the rebuilding of the temple which was finished in March 516 B.C.; but according to Ezra 7.19, he gave vessels for the temple. And the house of God was dedicated with great joy.

VI. THE BLESSEDNESS OF POSSESSION, Psalm 84.1-4. How dear is thy dwelling, O Jehovah of hosts! (We now use the word amiable in reference to

persons only, not to things.) My soul longs, yearns, even pines away for the courts of Jehovah, my whole being cries out unto the living God. Even the sparrow has found her house, and the swallow her nest where she can rear her young in the sacred precincts of thy altars, O Jehovah of hosts, my King and my God. How blessed are they that dwell in thy house, ever praising thee!

To the Psalmist the temple meant the place where he found God. It meant to him refuge, strength, worship, blessedness. Does not his longing for the sacred place shame our listless attendance in God's house? Is the church dear to us? Do we appreciate the privilege we have of meeting there with others to praise our God?

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Message of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

The history of the Books of Kings and Chronicles practically closes with the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the laying waste of the city and the destruction of the temple and city walls, and the deportation to Babylon of the best of its inhabitants. Fifty years pass, and the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah take up the history of the Jews after the first return to Jerusalem of exiles from Babylon in the reign of Cyrus, 536 B.C., and continue it through the first hundred years of Persian domination, down to the second visit of Nehemiah to Jerusalem in 432 B.C.

There is a gap of sixty years between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, and another of twelve or thirteen years between Ezra and Nehemiah, and the regular sequence of events is not always followed. In part the two books cover the same ground, and together they furnish a record of the refounding of the nation, rebuilding of the temple and of the city walls, the reëstablishing of the temple worship and the instituting of reforms in Jerusalem.

Ezra is, in brief, the Book of the Temple-building. Ezra, the leading actor in the history, is an intensely patriotic, deeply religious, but rather formal ecclesiastic.

The Background of Ezra 3.10-13

In the spring following the return of the exiles to Jerusalem, Zerubbabel the governor (appointed by Cyrus), Jeshua the high priest, priests, Levites and people, began preparations for the rebuilding of the temple by appointing the Levites over twenty years of age as overseers of the work. Then Jeshua, Kadmiel, the sons of Judah, and the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren, took charge of the workmen.

The Background of Psalm 84

The Psalm is shown to be post-exilic by the fact that the temple was standing, and it had two altars, for Solomon's temple had but one. It beautifully expresses the Hebrew longing for communion with God in the temple.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

With an impatience for instantaneous and measurable returns, men often ask of what good is church-going and family worship and personal prayer and Bible study? Occasionally there are immediate consequences—flashes of insight, kindlings of enthusiasm, awakenings of the soul; but these are rare. The dew which forms on the ground or the mist which covers a valley or the drops which seep into the soil from a shower seldom produce striking effects; but any chemist can tell us of the marvelous processes that begin when water touches the earth, and statisticians with their figures of crops per acre can show an impressive difference to be credited to the presence of a stately stream like the Hudson. The many who so lightly discard the habit of regular attendance at church, and think a Sunday in the country more beneficial for their children than uninterrupted Sunday school going, scarcely realize that they are cutting themselves and their boys and girls off from fructifying contacts with the stream of spiritual influences which rolls through the ages in the Christian Church. The loss is not at once apparent; but there are many failures where there are signs of pitiable spiritual drought.—Henry Sloane Coffin, in What Is There in Religion?

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

BUILDERS OF GOD'S HOUSE

Beginning the Lesson

The information given about the temple which was built after the return from exile is vague. Haggai's observation (2.3)—"Who is left among you that saw this

house in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes as nothing?"—tells us that it could not bear comparison with Solomon's temple. Because of the poverty of the people, this second temple must have lacked the rich interior decorations which made Solomon's temple so glorious. Perhaps it fulfilled only the first one of Ruskin's requirements of a building, "the doing of its practical duty well," and lacked the second requirement "that it be graceful and pleasing in doing it." But it was a building intensely longed-for, and it gave great happiness to the hearts of the returned exiles. We learn today something about the way in which it was built. (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

The Ideal and the Reality

Those who looked eagerly forward to the return from Babylon were inspired to paint the glories of the new movement in glowing colors, which now shine out in strong contrast to the hard, dull reality. But with this and many other examples still before us we still thank God for poets, idealists and enthusiasts, who make the desert of hard fact to "rejoice and blossom as the rose," and throw a halo of glory around "the day of small things." This small movement is a real link in the golden chain of God's providence, and turns out to be a thing of larger, more lasting significance than even the richest poetry had suggested. And the poetry is justified when we take a long view. "The ransomed of Jehovah shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." This is noble language, fit indeed for a description of heaven; but when the Sons of the Captivity returned to Zion what they found was not heaven but a very mean, miserable bit of earth, a city in ruins, and its very limited territory surrounded by envious and troublesome neighbors.

What use was there in these pious people struggling back to their old home, with such heroic faith and in the face of such tremendous difficulties? (Ezra 7.21.)

The men who led the return, as well as those who came later to support the cause, felt that this business was of infinite importance to themselves; they must put patriotism and piety before all personal considerations (Neh. 1). To stifle spiritual enthusiasm and conquer deep convictions would have been in the case of these men to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage; or to end by despising themselves and despairing of all noble effort.

In responding to the call of duty they did a work of great importance to those who were to come after. The second temple became a center towards which the Jews scattered throughout the world could turn in reverence and hope, the symbol of racial and religious unity. In distant lands, and among strange people, the pious Jew could greet the coming festival with the sweet words, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of Jehovah." Thus the worship was perpetuated and the highest religion kept its place until the Christ came to complete its revelation and to enlarge its mission. That being so, the work of these men was important for us; we who are so distant from them in time and so different in circumstances owe to them a deep debt of gratitude.—Condensed from Prophetic Ideas and Ideals, by W. G. Jordan.

Dean Stanley's Account of the Second Temple

If the measurements indicated in the decree of Cyrus were acted upon, the space which it covered and the height to which it rose were larger than the corresponding dimensions of its predecessor. It must have been in the absence of metal and carving that it was deemed so inferior to the first temple. The Holy of Holies was empty. The ark, the cherubs, the tables of stone, the vase of manna, the rod of Aaron, were gone. The golden shields had vanished. Even the High Priest, though he had recovered his official dress, had not been able to resume the breastplate with the oracular stones. Still, there was not lacking a certain splendor and solidity befitting the sanctuary of a people once so great, and of a religion once so self-contained. The High Priest and his family were well lodged, with guest chambers and store chambers on a large scale for the temple furniture. The doors of the temple were of gold. In three particulars the general arrangements differed from those of the ancient sanctuary. With the rigid jealousy which rendered this period hostile to all which approached the Canaanite worship, there were no more to be seen in the courts those beautiful clusters of palm, and olive, and cedar, which had furnished some of the most striking imagery of the poetry of the Monarchy, but which had also lent a shelter to the idolatrous rites that at times penetrated the

sacred enclosure. "No tree," "no grove," we are told, "was to be seen within the precincts." Another feature characteristic of the period was the fortress tower built at the northwest corner of the sanctuary which, serving in the first instance as a residence of the Persian governor, became in later days the Tower of Antonia, from which, in like manner, the Roman garrison controlled the proud population of Jerusalem. Like to this was the sign of subjection to the Persian power preserved in the eastern gate of the temple, called the Gate of Susa, from its containing a representation of the palace of the Persian capital. Thirdly, the court of the worshipers was divided for the first time into two compartments, of which the outer enclosure was known as the Court of the Gentiles, or Heathens.

How the Religious Life Was Continued after the Destruction of the Third Temple

This second, or Zerubbabel's temple, was succeeded by a third temple, built by Herod. The soldiers of Titus destroyed Herod's temple in 70 A.D., when Jerusalem was captured. With the destruction of the temple, sacrifice ceased and the entire Levitical ritual came to an end. A writer in the Jewish Chronicle explains what then happened:

"The temple worship had entered so deeply into the religious life of the people that its disappearance threatened untold disaster to the Jewish faith. What would have happened had it not been for the resourcefulness of a distinguished rabbi in those days, Jochanan ben Zakkai, who came to the fore, it is impossible to tell. But he stood up at this dark hour to save Judaism from extinction and its adherents from despair. He encouraged its despondent followers by assuring them that God did not require to be worshiped with sacrifices and burnt offerings. Charity and the love of mankind would take their place. It was a bold thing to say, and might mean everything or nothing. However, Jochanan ben Zakkai did much more than give expression to such consoling phrases. He was a man of action, and he set himself to build up things anew on a fresh foundation. He appeared in the enemy's camp before Titus, and was received by the Roman General with respect. He craved a small favor from the master of Rome's legions—that as Jerusalem was destined to fall, he might be permitted to establish a school at Jamnia. The request was at once granted, for, as the historian Graetz observes: 'Titus could not foresee that by so unimportant a concession he was enabling Judaism, feeble as it appeared, to outlive Rome in all its rigor by thousands of years.' So Jochanan settled with his disciples at Jamnia. 'He promoted the continuance and preservation of Judaism through the renewal and study of the Law, and thus rendered firmer the weakened foundations of commercial life.' We know that from that time the great teachers of Israel applied themselves with renewed vigor to the establishment of schools. Religious instruction became the passion of their lives."

What God's House Should Mean to the Community

The temple was the center of national gravity, and the concentration of thought upon its rebuilding was dictated by the consciousness that it was essential to the national life. Many today think that they can be all that they ought to be without church fellowship as well as with it. It is a grievous mistake; the social element is essential alike to the individual and national religious life. Forbes tells us that "the original forest in Sumatra is fast disappearing, but here and there a few trees have escaped the axe, and one cannot resist a feeling of pity for the solitude of these towering monarchs. They have withstood, in the company of their fellows, the storm and sun of centuries, but they survive their solitude only a very few seasons, getting feebler year by year, one great limb after another dying and dropping off, till all life ceases." It is much after this sort with the Christian life; it thrives only in the social atmosphere, it dwindles and dies in isolation.—Watkinson.

A Symbol of the Greatness of God

This great temple, and the multiplying temples like it, are a symbol of the greatness of our God. The houses which we build are great because great is our God above all gods. We do well to pour our wealth upon him. We must not cease until they are multiplied in sufficient numbers to accommodate the worshipers over all seas, in all lands, unto the uttermost parts of the earth.—Thomas Nicholson.

Blessed Are They That Dwell in Thy House

We sometimes hear the plea that God is everywhere, and that we can see and worship him in the green fields as well as in a church. It is true that we can keep

the Sabbath and worship amid trees and flowers, yet is there a special blessing in spending the sacred day where God has put his name.

One might reason, You can see the sky anywhere, you can watch from your own windows the sun, moon, and stars; why, therefore, spend days and nights in an observatory? Yes, but you get in an observatory a view of the firmament you get nowhere else: by the aid of special instruments and teachers you master secrets of the heavens in that astronomical coign of vantage not possible in your house or on the common.

God's house has special privileges and promises. There the heavens open; there God's voice is heard in majesty and mercy; there he feeds us with the bread in the strength of which we go many days.—W. L. Watkinson, in Gates of Dawn.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The significance of the church in the life of the community.

2. The viewpoints of the old men and of the young men; the good old days, and the golden days to come; backward-looking regret and forward-looking hopefulness; retrospection and anticipation. See Chapter II of According to My Gospel, by Hugh Black.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. How great a gap in time is there between the sixth and the seventh chapters of Ezra? 2. Who is the leader of the first part? 3. Who is the leader of the second part? 4. Who wrote the Book of Ezra? 5. What lessons can we learn from Ezra the man? 6. Was Ezra right in trusting to God for safe-conduct without an armed escort? 7. How do Christians today dishonor their religion before non-Christians? 8. What are some of the things which we claim our religion will do for us? 9. Do we live up to our assertions when a test comes in regard to our trust in God? 10. Should we trust to God for our welfare and not take precautions against dangers?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

BUILDING GOD'S HOUSE

Beginning the Lesson

A French writer describes the rebuilding of Chartres Cathedral after its destruction by fire. "Whole populations stopped their regular work, left their homes to help, the rich bringing money and jewels, and the poor putting in their barrows everything that could serve to feed labor and men, or help in the work. It was a constant stream of emigration, the spontaneous exodus of a people. Every road was crowded with pilgrims, all, men and women alike, dragging whole trees, pushing loads of sawn beams. What seems more incredible and is nevertheless attested by every chronicle of the time, is that this horde of old folks and children, of men and women, was at once amenable to discipline. And yet they belonged to every class of society, for there were among them knights and ladies of high degree. But divine love was so powerful that it annihilated distinctions and abolished castes. The nobles harnessed themselves with the laborers to drag the trucks. Patrician dames helped the peasant women to stir the mortar and to cook the food."

A somewhat similar scene must have been enacted at the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. What does Ezra the historian tell us about it?

At the Dedication of the Temple

Pashim the potter and his friend Sotai were taking their evening meal together. Pashim and Sotai were both men of the captivity who had returned to Jerusalem at the first proclamation of King Cyrus.

The oil lamp burned brightly, shedding a soft light upon the table, where Pashim's daughter, Susanna, waited upon her father and his guest. The morrow was to be a great day in Jerusalem. The long delays, the difficulties, the secret plots against the building of the temple, were over, and all that was wanting now was the ceremony of dedication. The Passover week had been chosen for the festival, so that men from outlying districts might be present without the expense or difficulty of an extra journey to the capital.

The talk of the two men at supper was all of the morrow's ceremony, and Susanna listened eagerly. "'Tis true what the young prophet of the Lord spake unto us?" said Sotai. "Aye," answered Pashim, "the promises of the Lord have been fulfilled in many ways; but which of his words meanest thou?"

"Did not Zechariah say, 'The hands of Zerubbabel laid the foundation of this

house, and his hands shall finish it'? And is not the Prince to dedicate it on the morrow?"

"If it had not been for the brave and stirring words of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, I verily believe the house would not have been brought to completion," said his friend. "'Be strong, be strong, and work: fear ye not!' That has been the message of Haggai and the visions of Zechariah have comforted many."

"'Tis a fair house, and strongly built," said Sotai; "and they tell me 'tis even larger than that of King Solomon."

"Ah! my sons," quavered the voice of an old man who had come silently up the path, and now stood in the doorway leaning upon a stick, "larger this house may be, but the glory of it cannot be compared to that of the former house."

"Come in, grandfather," cried Susanna, and she drew the old man to a seat, while Pashim and Sotai rose to show their respect. "Tell us of the ancient temple," pleaded Susanna softly.

"Where is the beautiful carving of lily work?" asked the old man, "and the ark of God, with the golden cherubim? The Holy of Holies is empty—for our sins. The tables of stone, the pot of manna, Aaron's rod—all gone!" and he shook his head sadly. "I could well weep at the contrast, as many of us wept when the foundation-stone was laid. Perhaps thou didst think that strange, my girl?" He laid his hand upon Susanna's head, and she smiled up at him.

"Indeed, grandfather, I did think it strange," she answered. "'Twas to be such a day of rejoicing, and yet one could scarcely hear the beautiful music and singing for the weeping and wailing."

The old man smiled. "When thou art an old woman, my child, thou wilt know that it is oft upon joyful occasions that one weeps!"—Grace Winter.

The First Church in Virginia

When I first went to Virginia, I well remember, we did hang an awning (which is an old sail) to three or four trees to shadow us from the sun, our walls were rails of wood, our seats unhewed trees, till we cut planks, our pulpit a bar of wood nailed to two neighboring trees; in foul weather we shifted into an old rotten tent, for we had few better, and this came by way of adventure for new; this was our church, till we built a homely thing like a barn, set upon cratchets, covered with rafts, sedge, and earth, so were also the walls: the best of our houses of the like curiosity, but the most part much worse workmanship, that could neither well defend wind nor rain, yet we had daily Common Prayer morning and evening, every Sunday two sermons, and every three months the Holy Communion, till our minister died, but our Prayers daily, with an Homily on Sundays: we continued two or three years after till more preachers came, and surely God did most mercifully hear us.—John Smith.

A Church Building in New Mexico

"Out in New Mexico there is a church built of tin cans. The people were poor, but there were plenty of tin cans, for nearby was a rock crusher and quarry where a great deal of powder had been used for blasting. So the powder cans were saved until there were enough to build the walls of the church. These were held together by mortar. Of course there had to be some wood used in finishing it, but wood is pretty scarce in that part of the State and it would have been hard to get enough wood to build the whole church. A Sunday school missionary found this queer sort of church full of people."

Sentence Sermons

O Master, deign this church to bless,
This house of prayer, this home of rest,
And let its door a gateway be
To lead us from ourselves to thee.—Whittier.

St. Paul's Cathedral is nothing but a glorified quarry if Christ be out of it, and my old gipsy tent is a cathedral when Christ is in it.—Gipsy Smith.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Who was the leader of the first company of returning exiles? 2. In what year did they reach Jerusalem? 3. What conditions did they find there? 4. Who was Ezra? 5. Why did Ezra want to go to Jerusalem? 6. How did Ezra prove his great faith in God? 7. Would it be right for you to rely on God and not have a physician if you were seriously ill?

LESSON IX—SEPTEMBER 1

EZRA'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM

GOLDEN TEXT: The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good. Ezra 8.22

LESSON Ezra 7.1 to 8.36

DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 63.1-8

EZRA 7.6 This Ezra went up from Babylon. And he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which Jehovah, the God of Israel, had given; and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of Jehovah his God upon him. 7 And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinim, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. 8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. 9 For upon the first *day* of the first month began he to go up from Babylon; and on the first *day* of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. 10 For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances.

8.21 Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek of him a straight way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. 22 For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way, because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them that seek him, for good; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. 23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us.

31 Then we departed from the river Ahava on the twelfth *day* of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy and the lier-in-wait by the way. 32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

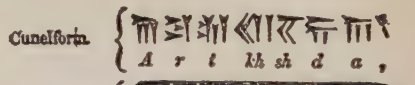
EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. WITH THE PERMISSION OF ARTAXERXES, EZRA GOES TO JERUSALEM, 7.6-10. Ezra was a descendant of Seraiah, the chief priest during the reign of the last King of Judah, and traced his ancestry back to Aaron. He was "a ready scribe of the law which the Lord God of Israel had given." He studied the law, and not only copied it but interpreted it. He requested permission from King Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem, and this the king readily granted. With a company of Jews who wished to settle in Judea, and with priests, scribes and singers for the temple service, porters to keep the temple gates (1 Ch. 9.17) and Nethinim, servants for the temple (1 Ch. 9.2), he left Babylon the first month (Nisan, March-April) of the seventh year of King Artaxerxes, and reached there in the fifth month (Ab, July-August) after a journey of nearly four months. His purpose in going to Jerusalem was to teach the statutes and ordinances of the law to the people there. As for himself, he had "set his heart to seek the law of Jehovah," and what was more, "to do it."

Between the knowing what should be done and the doing of it there is, alas! too often a gulf never bridged. Mere knowing about others' needs or mere expression of regret at their needs does not avail; the true philanthropist is one who knows and sympathizes and does. "Do the good you meditate," in the words of Horace Bushnell, "or if you never find the time for doing it, have the frankness to confess that your good intentions are hollow and worthless."

The One Volume Commentary states that the Jews who remained in Babylon, and who were surrounded by a population wholly heathen, were marked off from their neighbors by a much deeper line of cleavage than were the Jews of Palestine, and a higher standard of religious devotion prevailed among them: consequently, when the religious laxity of the people of Jerusalem became known at Babylon, Ezra was sent to inquire into it (verse 14), to introduce reforms, and, by authority of the Persian king, to enforce the observance of the Law by means of penalties (verse 26). Artaxerxes not only granted Ezra's request, but also gave him much gold and silver for the temple and also a letter in which he directed his officers in Judea to do whatever Ezra might ask. "Blessed be Jehovah, the God of our fathers," exclaimed Ezra, "who hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of Jehovah; and hath extended lovingkindness unto me."

II. A LIST OF THOSE WHO WENT WITH EZRA, 8.1-14. "It is interesting to notice names that had occurred in the earlier lists of the followers of Zerubbabel, showing that some of the descendants of those who refused to go on the first expedition took part in the second. They remind us of Christiana and her children who would not join the Pilgrim when he set out from the City of Destruction, but who subsequently followed in his footsteps. But there was little at Jerusalem to attract a new expedition, for the glamor which had surrounded the first return, with a son of David at its head, had faded in grievous disappointment; and the second series of pilgrims had to carry with them the torch with which to rekindle the flames of devotion" (Walter F. Adeney).

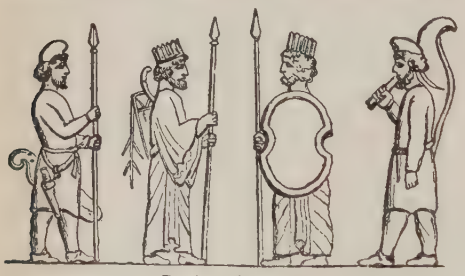


The Name Artaxerxes

III. AT THE RIVER AHAVA, 8.15-23. We return to the beginning of Ezra's journey. Ezra and his company encamped for three days at the river Ahava. On reviewing his followers, Ezra discovered the absence of Levites for the temple service, upon whom he was depending for the work of teaching in Israel the statutes and ordinances. "The Levites were those who before Josiah's reformation had served as priests at the high places, and for this reason Ezekiel's program assigned to them a distinctly subordinate place in the reconstructed temple (Ezek. 44.10-13). Naturally, then, the prospect of return had little attraction for them, and that accounts for their absence from Ezra's company." Ezra sent to Casiphia, where there must have been a Jewish colony, and about forty Levites and two hundred and twenty Nethinim, temple servants, were secured. Then he proclaimed a fast by the river and all humbled themselves before God.

"Happy are they who have the grace to walk in the valley of humiliation, for this leads to the armory of supernatural power" (Walter F. Adeney).

Ezra prayed for a "straight way," a direct way, a way free from difficulties. Nehemiah later (Neh. 2.9) took with him a strong guard for the same journey, but Ezra thought he could not do this without showing a lack of faith in God, of whose protecting care he had said so much to the king. "We shall be in God's hands," he had said. "His power and his wrath are against all that forsake him," he had furthermore declared, and to trust in the king's escort of soldiers rather than in God seemed to Ezra a forsaking of God. "So we fasted and besought our God for help" on the way, wrote Ezra, and as he looked backward after the journey was made he could add, "he was entreated of us," he had guided and kept them.


Persian Soldiers

As a rule, such imprudence would have been presumption. But Ezra's position, that religion must stand the test of life, should be that of all Christians. What is one's trust in God worth, if it cannot free him from anxious care?

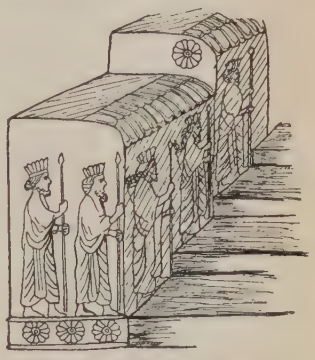
IV. THE GIFTS FOR THE TEMPLE AND THEIR CUSTODIANS, 8.24-30. The treasures of gold and silver and sacred vessels which the king and counsellors and the Israelites had given for the temple, Ezra had weighed and counted and given into the charge of twelve priests and ten Levites, making them responsible for their safe-keeping until the treasure could be again weighed and counted before witnesses in the chamber of the temple—the store rooms around the outer walls of the court of the temple.

V. THE JOURNEY AND ARRIVAL, 8.31-36. The river Ahava was left on

the twelfth of the first month, and Jerusalem was reached on the first day of the fifth month. God delivered them "from the hand of the enemy and the lier-in-wait by the way." After resting three days, the treasure was weighed in the temple, and burnt-offerings were offered.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Against the enemy in the way, 7.22. Although Ezra's company was a large one, wandering Bedouins, wild men of the desert, might attack and plunder, if not kill, the rear column. No caravan today, however large, would think of carrying on that journey such an amount of gold and silver without an armed guard.



Stairway of Persian Palace

Fine bright brass, precious as gold, 7.27. Whether brass, the alloy of copper and zinc, was known to the Persians is doubtful. Utensils of bronze, the alloy of copper and tin, and of copper, were in use.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Between the Dedication of the Temple and the Coming of Ezra

The first company of Jews under Zerubbabel went from the Land of Exile to Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Cyrus, 538 B.C. The curtain of history falls in Judea after the second temple was dedicated in 516 B.C., in the sixth year of Darius, King of Persia. It does not rise again until the arrival of Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, in 458 B.C. The fifty-eight years or more which are passed over in silence were years of struggle and disappointment for the colony. The burst of enthusiasm for the temple and its worship which the prophets Haggai and Zechariah inspired died away, the temple was poorly furnished and its services poorly kept up, the walls of Jerusalem were still unfinished, and the people were disillusioned and demoralized, and had even intermarried with the heathen nations around them. Zerubbabel, if Jewish tradition is correct, returned to Babylon to die, and no leader arose to take his place.

Meanwhile the Persians had invaded Greece and the famous battles of Marathon, Thermopylæ, Salamis, and Platæa had decided their fate in Europe. The revolt of Egypt in the reign of Darius (487 B.C.) and again in that of Artaxerxes (462-456 B.C.) brought the Persian army through Syria, and it is probable that the people of Judea were called upon for supplies and even for service.

Ezra the Scribe

Ezra was a priest and a scribe, "the most conspicuous of that order of men which now first came into prominence and was destined afterwards to play so fatal a part in the religious history of Judaism. The scribes, or sopherim, had in some form long existed. They had originally been the registrars or clerks by whom the people or the army were numbered. They then rose into higher importance as royal secretaries. Then, as the Prophetic Writings took a more literary form, and the calamities of the falling Monarchy and the subsequent exile stimulated the nation to collect and register the fragments of the part, they took a conspicuous place by the side of the prophets. Such a one in the earlier generation had been Baruch, the friend of Jeremiah. Such a one now was Ezra in the Jewish schools of Chaldean learning."

THE GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The river Ahava, by which Ezra reviewed his company, must have been one of the tributaries or canals of the Euphrates, not very far from Babylon.

"As the crow flies" the distance across the desert between Babylon and Jerusalem was about five hundred miles, but by the caravan route around the desert it was at least nine hundred miles, and the journey, on foot by the greater number, would require the three months and a half spent. All that Ezra tells about the journey are the words, "We came to Jerusalem."

Professor George Rawlinson writes that "The course of the traveler must be up the stream of the Euphrates, either on one side of it or the other. The left, or eastern bank, of the river, is that usually preferred, since the country to the west of the Euphrates is for some distance marshy, and in wet season impassable, while the whole tract is more exposed than the left bank to the attacks of the predatory Arab tribes, who roam freely over the great desert which intervenes between Mesopotamia and Palestine. Ezra, with his caravan of six thousand Israelites, probably quitted Babylon by the north gate—the gate of Nineveh—and proceeded northwestward along the river-course from the site of Babylon to that of Is or Hit, a distance of one hundred and forty miles. This he would accomplish in the space of nine days, without much trouble or fatigue. His way lay through cultivated districts, in a part of the empire which was well watched and guarded, perhaps along a "Royal Road," though not the Royal Road which is described by Herodotus. The caravan under his charge carried tents (Ezra 8.15), which were pitched at the end of each day's journey, and sufficiently protected the travelers from the heavy night dews, and from any possible storms or other changes in the weather. It was accompanied, no doubt, by a considerable number of baggage animals—asses, camels, mules, and perhaps horses."

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Although Ezra relied upon God for his safety on the way, he, nevertheless, prepared carefully for the journey, and exercised great precaution in regard to the valuable offerings for the temple which he was carrying to Jerusalem. It has been said of Dr. Joseph Parker, of London, that he labored for the sermon he was to deliver as if he had no God to help him, and then preached in reliance upon God as if he had made no preparation. Could a teacher follow a better example than that of these two men?

Observe Ezra's method of procedure: he first learned and then taught. "He sought the law of the Lord and so laid up a good treasure, and then instructed others and laid out what he had laid up." He also first did and then taught, practiced the commandments and then directed others in the practice of them; thus his example confirmed his doctrine.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS
TRUST AND PROVIDENCE

Beginning the Lesson

Ezra was "a ready scribe"—a skilful scribe, we are told in the sixth verse of the seventh chapter—but he was not like the later scribes of Christ's time, who were learned in the letter of the law but were strangers to its spirit. To know and to do the law were the first steps in Ezra's program; the third step was to teach it to others. His desire to see the law more strictly observed by his countrymen who had returned to Judea was the primary motive which led him to undertake his mission there. Secondary motives were the beautifying of the temple (7.19, 20) and the establishment of civil order (7.25), but his main object was the teaching and enforcement of the law. Text Explained.

Trust and Providence

Is it right for one who trusts God to insure his house against fire? Is it right for him to make provision for his family in his old age? What is our Golden Text? If God's hand is upon all his true followers for good, should they not leave all things to him and trust that he will take care of them? Let us see what our lesson teaches as to this.

When Nehemiah went to Jerusalem he had an escort of captains of the army and horsemen of the king. When Ezra went, he trusted in the protection of God alone. Which one did right? Both. It was only common prudence for Nehemiah to have a sufficient guard on a long journey where he was liable to attacks from robbers. Ezra, however, felt that his position was peculiar. He had told the king what great things God could do, and how he trusted God implicitly, and if now he asked the king for human protection on that perilous journey, he believed the king would think that he had merely been talking—that he did not really trust God's power.

Whether or not we agree with Ezra's reasoning, we admire his loyalty to God and his wonderful trust. When no principle was at stake, he could be as prudent

and business-like as anyone. Notice the great care he took with the large amount of money and treasure that went with them on the journey. He set apart men whose sole duty it was to guard this wealth, and on reaching Jerusalem he had the silver and gold and vessels weighed in the temple, and the amounts written down, that they might be seen to equal the amounts received in Babylon.

It was the special occasion that freed Ezra. Recall the temptation scene in Jesus' life. "Then the devil taketh Jesus into the holy city; and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge concerning thee'; and, 'On their hands they shall bear thee up, lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.'" Did Jesus do as did Ezra, throw prudence to the wind, and thereby prove his trust in God? "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God," was his answer. Only the special occasion could free Ezra from the guilt of making trial of the Lord his God. Occasions are rare in the life of a Christian when he is justified in trusting in God without making use of whatever means God has placed at his disposal to secure his own safety.

When Reliance upon God without Personal Effort Was Not Presumption

When Paul and Silas were in prison at Philippi, their feet fast in the stocks, what prudential measures could they take for their release? Yet most persons in their circumstances would have spent the night in great anxiety. Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns of praise, for they were confident of God's power to release them. And the wonderful deliverance vindicated their trust.

Mr. W. J. Mosier, writing in the Christian Intelligencer, gives this incident. In 1799, when the armies of Napoleon were sweeping over the Continent, Massena, one of his generals, suddenly appeared on the heights above the little town of Feldkirk, on the frontier of Austria, with an army of 18,000 men. It was Easter Day, and as the morning sun glittered upon the weapons of the French, the town council hastily assembled to consult what was to be done. Should a deputation be sent to Massena, with the keys of the town, and an entreaty for mercy, or should they attempt resistance? Then the old dean of the church stood up and said: "This is Easter Day. We have been counting on our own strength, and that fails. This is the day of our Lord's Resurrection. Let us ring the bells and have service as usual, and leave the matter in God's hands. We know only our weakness and not the power of God." Then all at once from three or four church towers the bells began to chime joyous peals in honor of the day, and the streets were filled with worshipers hastening to the house of God. The French heard with surprise and alarm the sudden clangor of joy bells, and concluded that the Austrian army had arrived in the night to relieve the place. Massena soon broke up his camp, and before the bells had ceased ringing not a Frenchman was to be seen.

When Trust without Precaution Becomes Presumption

According to the view of the Christian Scientist, the presence of the physician in the sickroom is equivalent to a disavowal of the faith, a bit of tangible atheism, a thing as heathenish as the calling in the medicine-men of a savage tribe. We ought to be ashamed to summon medical aid, seeing that we have boasted of the hand of our God being upon us for good. But this view throughout is miserably mistaken. The whole conception springs out of a lack of appreciation of the divinity that pervades all things, and betrays blindness to the glorious fact that natural laws and processes are the appointments of God and the channels of his grace, which, indeed, they are. There is no Christian Science except as all true science is Christian, and the cultured physician, working closely on the lines which condition health, is a loyal servant of God and humanity, in whom the pious sufferer has special grounds for trust. John Wesley tells that on a certain occasion he was "cured by sulphur and supplication," and all men who are wise as they are good will practice the dual treatment. To refuse medical aid and its prescriptions, trusting wholly in God, may by some be mistaken for a sublime faith, but it is really practical atheism, ignoring as it does the established order of God. Religious men must not presume on a guardianship unknown to other men, and in consequence neglect worldly caution. A marine-insurance company at Cadiz once took the Virgin Mary into partnership, covenanting to set aside her portion of the profits for the enrichment of her shrine in that city, not doubting that she would protect every vessel in which she had such a manifest interest. The infatuated company underwrote ships of all sorts at reduced rates, and forthwith came to grief. The same snare

entices spiritually-minded men today; dispensing with ordinary circumspection, they attempt to conduct their business on what they consider a religious basis, when they ought to know that the most religious basis is the sound commercial basis.—W. L. Watkinson, in Inspiration for Common Life.

The Safeguarded Life

Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe, is the prayer and the assurance of a verse in the 119th Psalm. Throughout this long psalm the singer reveals a vivid consciousness of the difficulties and perils of the heavenly pathway, and of his personal insufficiency to deal with them. The text is the language of one who felt that he could not hold himself up. Sooner or later all sincere souls prove this. In the pride of the heart we boast of self-sufficiency, but the unsparing pressure of life and bitter failure in critical hours teach the indispensability of wisdom and strength beyond our own. Self-reliance is essential to every one of us; only the self-reliance that falls back on the presence and fellowship of God will suffice to carry us unhurt through the fiery trial.

Home, sweet home, with its pleasantness and pathos; the charm of literature, the miracles of science, the spell of music, the visions of art; the daily round, with its ever fresh solicitudes and satisfactions; the calls of patriotism, the demands of duty, the glow of love, the pleasures of friendship, social service, the abandon of pastimes—these, and many other similar things pertaining to the natural life, when accepted, exercised, and enjoyed in the sunshine of the Lord, constitute our strength and guarantee our peace, despite all the allurements of sin. We are not saved by some unknown magic, but God draws our heart to himself through the sanctified gifts, situations, and activities which go to the making up of human life. Here is our impregnable defence.—W. L. Watkinson.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. To be religious does not mean to be unbusinesslike.

2. Leaders of religious education.

3. Prayer and Providence. See The Life of Prayer in a World of Science, by William Adams Brown.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Read Nehemiah 2 to 7. 2. Why was there so much opposition to the rebuilding of the walls? 3. Who said "Trust in God and keep your powder dry," and how did Nehemiah carry out this thought? 4. What precautions were taken? 5. How were the citizens allowed to act on the principle of self-preservation? 6. Which helped most in the rebuilding, Nehemiah's money, materials and men, or faith and energy? 7. What qualities do you admire in Nehemiah? 8. What lessons can we learn from Nehemiah the man?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

HOW PRAYER HELPS

Beginning the Lesson

"Look forward and not back; look outward and not in; look upward and not down; and lend a hand." You all know this motto of the "Lend-a-Hand Club." Do you know who originated it? It was Edward Everett Hale, who has been called "a great Christian." He lived up to the motto always. "It was a big, abstract sort of motto, which a big man might be expected to formulate and then leave to smaller workers to carry out," The Wellspring comments. "But Dr. Hale practiced it long before he preached it, and kept it up to the end of his life of brotherly love. Precept is easy and short; conduct is hard and steady work."

We have a new hero in our lesson today, and we shall see how he, like Dr. Hale, practiced what he preached. (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Heroic Faith

Ezra and his company had a long, weary journey of four months before them. They had had little experience of arms and warfare, or of hardships and desert marches, in their Babylonian homes. Their caravan was made unwieldy and feeble by the presence of a large proportion of women and children. They had much valuable property with them. The stony desert, which stretches unbroken from the

Euphrates to the uplands on the east of Jordan, was infested then as now by wild bands of marauders, who might easily sweep down on the encumbered march of Ezra and his men, and make a clean sweep of all which they had.

And he knew that he had but to ask and have an escort from the king that would ensure their safety till they saw Jerusalem. Artaxerxes' surname, "the long-handed," may have described a physical peculiarity, but it also expressed the reach of his power: his arm could reach these wandering plunderers, and if Ezra and his troop were visibly under his protection, they could march secure. So it was not a small exercise of trust in a higher hand that is told us here so simply. It took some strength of principle to abstain from asking what it would have been so natural to ask, so easy to get, so comfortable to have. But, as he says, he remembers how confidently he has spoken of God's defence and he feels that he must be true to his professed creed, even if it deprives him of the king's guards. He halts his followers for three days at the last station before the desert, and there, with fasting and prayer, they put themselves in God's hand; and then the band, with their wives and little ones, and their substance,—a heavily-loaded and feeble caravan,—fling themselves into the dangers of the long, dreary, robber-haunted march. Did not the scribe's robe cover as brave a heart as ever beat beneath a breastplate?—Condensed from Expositions of Holy Scripture, by Alexander Maclaren.

Three Reasons for Ezra's Success

Dr. J. E. McFadyen, writing in The Pilgrim Teacher, ascribes the effectiveness of Ezra's leadership to three main facts:

(1) Leader and led were like-minded, inspired by the same spirit and devoted to the same end. The absence of the Levites from the first muster shows that nobody went who did not wish to go. Those who are banded together in a common cause must love the cause: there must be intelligent enthusiasm on the part of the led, no less than on the part of the leaders.

(2) The leader was capable of real initiative and authority. Ezra shows fine practical sagacity throughout. He holds a muster of his men before the start proper, and takes immediate steps to have the serious gaps in their ranks filled up. Again, he is not afraid of his under officers. He talks very plainly to them of their obligation to maintain their holiness, and to look after the gifts entrusted to them with vigilance and fidelity.

(3) There was a genuine and practical recognition of God. The expedition was inspirited through and through with a sense of the divine presence.

How Prayer Helps

Ezra had assured the king that the hand of God is upon all those that seek him, for good. But Ezra did not venture upon his long journey without asking God's blessing upon it and God's care on the way. He humbled himself before God, and sought of him a straight way. Prayer brings God's help. Stanley proved this in his perilous journeys in Africa. "On all my expeditions," he wrote, "prayer made me stronger, morally and mentally, than any of my non-praying companions. It did not blind my eyes, nor dull my mind, nor close my ears; but, on the contrary, it gave me confidence. It did more; it gave me joy, and pride in my forest tracks, made me eager to face the day's perils and fatigues."

Anna Burnham Bryant writes in The Pilgrim Teacher as follows: "Stevenson tells a thrilling story of a vessel caught in a great storm off a rocky coast, in danger of being beaten to pieces on the rough rocks. The passengers were wild with terror. But one man plucked up courage to creep up on deck, contrary to orders, to see for himself how things were going. There he made his dangerous way to the pilot house where he saw the steersman lashed to his post, calmly and steadily holding his wheel and running the ship out to sea. The pilot saw him, too, and gave him a reassuring smile. Full of sudden cheer and comfort, the passenger went below, telling the frightened company there not to fear any longer. 'I have seen the face of the pilot and he smiled. It is all well.'

"So to Ezra and his company must have come a feeling of peace and assurance when their prayers and fasting brought the conviction that God 'was entreated' of them, and would be their pilot and protector. The dangers were no less real, but they felt that their leader was unterrified."

Helping God's Hand

In a certain eastern land two sheiks were imprisoned. Sheik Cassim was blind

and Sheik Ahmed was lame. They passed their time arguing about passages from the Koran. They came to this passage: "When God creates a human being, he creates also his inheritance, which must come into his possession." Sheik Cassim said this must be taken literally, that God would send each man his portion, without any exertion on his part. Sheik Ahmed, on the other hand, held that God intended each man to exert himself to obtain possession of his inheritance.

It chanced that a wealthy merchant bound himself by a vow to supply the prisoners with good food and extra dainties for a term of seven days. An officer proclaimed through the prison: "Ho! all ye poor, ye that hunger and thirst, come and partake of the inheritance and bounty of God!" Then the prisoners went to the prison yard where the food was given them.

Sheik Cassim would not accept his friend's offer to lead him into the yard. "Nay," he said, "if I have any inheritance in this supply, God will send it to me here." He continued his prayer, while Sheik Ahmed hobbled off to secure his portion.

On the seventh day the merchant himself visited the prison and heard what the blind sheik had said. He was touched by his expression of faith and gave orders that a generous supply of food be brought to the blind man.

The next time that Ahmed saw his friend Cassim he told him of the merchant's kindness, and declared that it proved he was right, the inheritance came to him. "Very true," said Sheik Ahmed, "God is indeed good to all who trust in him. But," he added, "remember that to you, as you waited, God sent a portion only once, whereas I, who took the trouble to go, received a portion seven times from his bountiful hand."

A Lesson from a Lowly Life

"How's the fish, skipper?" was Dr. Grenfell's first question one bitter cold night. The Strathcona anchored alongside the fishing schooner and the Doctor climbed over the rail.

"Very scarce, doctor," he answered; "never scarcer. You may say there's nothing to it."

"Then I guess there won't be much for you to carry home to the wife and babes."

"There'll be little enough to eat this winter, and less to keep the cold out; for I don't expect to be able to look at clothing."

"What will you do then?"

"Leave 'em behind and get out of the country, I suppose, and look for work. Maybe I'll get a chance to earn a bit in the mines at Sydney or somewhere, so as to feed 'em and get an outfit for next fishery."

Dr. Grenfell gives this conversation in What Life Means to Me, and records his going below with the skipper, the listening to music from a fisherman's accordion, and then the giving of "just a word of prayer," "that he who holds the world in the hollow of his hand might open that hand that his children might be fed—if it seemed good to him—seeing that we were doing all we could."

"If it seemed good to him"—that is the proviso of all prayer, and "seeing that we were doing all we could"—that should be the proviso of all who offer this prayer.

The skipper's trustful words after the prayer bring the mists to one's eyes as one reads them: "Good night, doctor. It cheers one up to remember that God is on his throne. 'Tis good to believe that he's *our* Father, and will do right by his children. Good-night."

Sentence Sermons

Trust in God and keep your powder dry.—Cromwell.

Trust in nothing but in Providence and your own efforts: never separate the two.—Dickens.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Read Nehemiah 2 to 7. 2. What led Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem? 3. What did he do there three days after his arrival? 4. Who were "grieved exceedingly" because there was come to Jerusalem "a man to seek the welfare of Israel"? 5. What trouble did these men cause Nehemiah? 6. Who were Nehemiah's avowed enemies? 7. Who were his false friends? 8. Why was Nehemiah not discouraged? 9. How did the people work? 10. What work is needed in your class or home that you could do? 11. Have you a mind to do it?

NEHEMIAH REBUILDING THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

GOLDEN TEXT: The people had a mind to work. Nehemiah 4.6

LESSON Nehemiah 2.1 to 7.4 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 85.1-7

NEHEMIAH 4.6 So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto half *the height* thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. 16 And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. 17 They that builded the wall and they that bare burdens laded themselves; every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon; 18 and the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. 19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another: 20 in what place soever ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us; our God will fight for us.

21 So we wrought in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. WITHSTANDING RIDICULE, verses 1-6. See The Historical Background. "What are these feeble Jews up to?" mockingly questioned Sanballat before his brethren and the army of Samaria. "Do they think they can do it all in a day? Do they expect to bring the stones to life out of these heaps of rubbish?"

"In every community there are crowds of people who have gone to the wall. They feel crushed and beaten. Now, the Church's mission is to do for this ruined mass what Nehemiah did for the rubbish-heaps of Jerusalem —to build out of them the city of God. The rubbish-heap is God's raw material. A revival is his finished product. Let the Church get to work. She alone is equipped for so divine a duty. She knows how to transform this mass of rubbish into a field of roses" (F. W. Boreham).

Then Tobiah joined in the ridicule. "That stone wall which they are building," he said, "will be broken down if a fox tries to scale it." Their words were repeated to Nehemiah, and he appealed to God to judge them. "Ridicule that comes out of the real humor of the situation may be hard to bear, but the man ridiculed often finds his labors lightened if he can himself see the humorous side. The ridicule of Sanballat and Tobiah, however, came from fear and a realization of the power of Nehemiah. Nehemiah kept steadily at his work in face of ridicule. The trouble with righteous indignation is that many times the man who is righteously indignant has to stop his work to vent his feeling. The resentment of Nehemiah against the enemies of the Lord only made him more determined to finish the wall."

"The people had a mind to work," Nehemiah said, giving them the credit for the work as he records the completion of half the height of the wall. It is thought that the most ancient walls had a height of two hundred feet.

"He who is severed from a cause he knows is right, through fear of ridicule, taunts, sneers or sarcasm of those around him, is not a man self-directed by right. He is only a weak prophet pulled by the strings of manipulation in the hands of others" (William George Jordan).

II. ENEMIES CONSPIRE TOGETHER TO STOP THE WORK, verses 7-9, 11. "Common hatred has a wonderful power of uniting former foes," and the various peoples of the land, Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites, were very angry when they learned that the repairing of the walls progressed and the breaks were being filled in. They feared to have Jerusalem once more a powerful political center, but greater than this fear was their hatred of the religious ideals that inspired the rebuilding. They agreed to go together to Jerusalem. Their coming would terrify the timid, work would stop, and confusion would result, they thought. They planned to come so stealthily as to take the Jews unawares, and by slaying many of

them cause the work to stop. But Nehemiah posted sentinels day and night and prayed, and "to pray and watch is the road to victory."

"What was the prayer of Nehemiah as he set the watch? Quite likely for the Lord to enable the sentinels to keep their eyes open and their senses alert. In our Civil War a Federal general once complained bitterly after a battle that the Almighty had not dealt fairly with his troops. He declared that he was fighting the cause of the Lord and yet that he had met ignominious defeat. The trouble was that the general had failed to post his pickets properly. All day long the enemy had been moving in a flank march around him. The truth had been pointed out to him by officer after officer. Would this general's prayers to the Lord avail anything in the face of such carelessness? Nehemiah would have said not. He called upon his soldiers to have religion enough to keep awake" (Francis J. McConnell).

"The true way to meet opposition is twofold—prayer and prudent watchfulness" (Alexander Maclaren).

III. TROUBLE WITHIN THE RANKS, verses 10, 12. The wall was half-way up, and, as Dr. Maclaren observes, half-way through is just the critical time in all protracted work—the fervor of beginning has passed, and the animation of seeing the end at hand has not sprung up. The people of Judah began to murmur, and to say they could not build the wall, there was too much rubbish, and the strength of those who were trying to clean it away was exhausted. This complaint and discouragement of his own workers must have been harder for Nehemiah to cope with than the hostile efforts of his enemies. Moreover, again and again the Jews who lived in the neighborhood of the enemies declared it was futile to attempt to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and urged the workers to give up the work and come and dwell among them.

If you will not help, at least do not hinder. "Pull, push, lift, carry—do something, or get out of the way and let others build. Cowardice and idle criticism on the part of supposed friends are as fatal to successful work as the open hostility of the foe."

IV. BUILDING AND BATTLING, verses 13-21. Forewarned, forearmed. Therefore, in the lowest spaces behind the walls and in the open spaces Nehemiah placed men with arms—arrows for use when the enemy was at a distance, spears as the enemy drew near, and swords for a hand-to-hand fight. When he beheld the enemy approaching in the distance, he counseled fearless fighting, but the enemy, hearing that their plan for a sudden attack was known to the Jews, retreated, and the latter resumed the work upon the walls. From that time onward, half of Nehemiah's bodyguard worked on the wall, and half stood ready with spears, shields, bows and coats of mail. Back of the soldiers were the rulers, ready to issue orders when the trumpet sounded an alarm.

"It was an effective correlation of the constructive with the defensive forces of human society. The religious leader who counsels his people to do with their might what their hands find to do in building a form of society worthy to be esteemed as the Kingdom of God on earth, and at the same time counsels them to smite hip and thigh the saloon and the brothel, the gambling den, the unjust employer of labor and the knavish employé who is a slacker, the political grafter and all other vermin which prey upon society, is a man of sword and trowel, ready alike to build that which is good and to drive back the forces of evil" (Charles R. Brown).

V. FURTHER EFFORTS TO STOP THE WORK, 4.22 to 7.4. Four times Sanballat and Geshem tried to get Nehemiah into their power by urging him to meet them on the plain of Ono, but Nehemiah answered: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease while I leave it and come to you?" Next, in an open letter that all could read, Sanballat accused Nehemiah of purposing to make himself king, and threatened to make known his object to the king of Persia if he still refused to arbitrate with them. Nehemiah met this with a prayer to God: "Strengthen thou my hands!" As a last resort, Tobiah and Sanballat sought to deprive Nehemiah of his influence over the people by making him seem a coward. "Should such a man as I flee?" Nehemiah exclaimed to their suggestion through a hired prophet that he hide himself in the temple because his life was in danger.

Despite all opposition from enemies and all fears and weakness of workers, the wall was completed in the short space of fifty-two days. With great rejoicing a solemn dedication service was held.

"Now, Mr. Tapley," said Mark in Dickens' story, giving himself a tremendous blow in the chest by way of reviver, "just you attend to what I've got to say. Things is looking about as bad as they can look, young man. You'll not have such another opportunity for showing your jolly disposition, my fine fellow, as long as you live; and therefore, Tapley, now's your time to come out strong or never!" Things were seemingly looking about as bad as they could look when the walls around Jerusalem had reached half their destined height. Then was Nehemiah's time for coming out strong, and he did. He refused to be discouraged. He put heart into his people. And by his own indomitable will Nehemiah triumphed and the walls were completed. One resolute man outgeneraled the multitude.

"We may not be responsible for discouragements suggesting themselves, but we are responsible for letting them become dissuasive."

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, verse 10. These must have been the removers of the rubbish, for representations in Assyrian monuments show that in that age the heavy blocks were brought into position by means of rollers and pulleys. The removing of the rubbish was drudgery. The men had first to break up the piles with pickaxes, and then rake the pieces into baskets with a heavy, short-handled hoe, and carry the baskets away on their backs.

A Cupbearer

The coats of mail, verse 16. They probably consisted of metallic scales rounded at the bottom and squared at the top, and sewed on linen or felt. On a bas-relief at Nineveh are seen warriors with coats of scale armor which descend to the knees or ankles. In one of the palaces Layard discovered a number of scales used for this armor. Each scale was of iron two or three inches long, rounded at one end and squared at the other, with a raised or embossed line in the center, and some were inlaid with copper. At a later period the Assyrian armor was made of smaller scales, which were pointed and ornamented with raised figures, and the coat of mail reached no lower than the waist.—J. M. Freeman, in Bible Manners and Customs.

It is unlikely that the common soldiers wore heavy coats of mail. Their defensive armor probably consisted of tough leather doublets protecting the body down to the knees and leaving the arms bare. The hard, specially prepared hides of which they were made were almost impenetrable to the arrow.—Herbert Edward Ryle, in Cambridge Bible.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Ezra's Reform

Ezra was made the chief judge of the whole Jewish community, and his first reform concerned the intermarriage of the Jews with their heathen neighbors. As Stanley notes, Ezra was a scribe first and a priest afterwards; the temple was an object of his veneration, but it was nothing compared to "The Law." He compelled the men who had married heathen wives to part with them and even with their children.

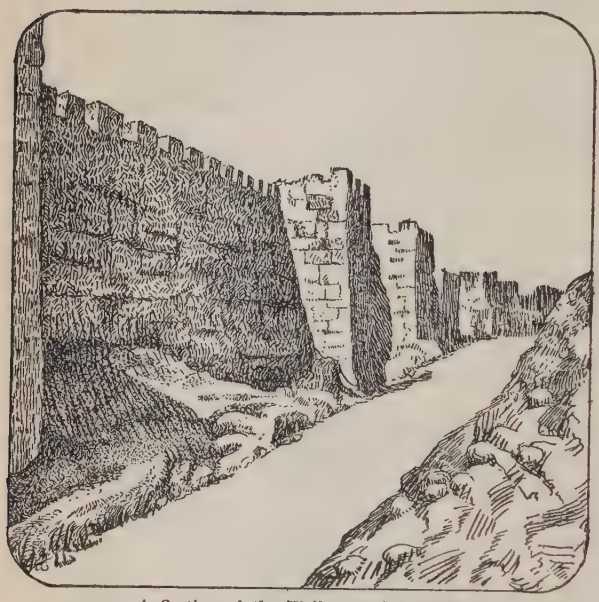
Tidings of Deplorable Conditions in Jerusalem Brought to Nehemiah

Thirteen years intervene between Ezra's reform and the beginning of Nehemiah's memoirs in the Book of Nehemiah. The same king, Artaxerxes Longimanus, is on the Persian throne, and it is now the year 445 B.C. Grave disasters have meanwhile befallen the Jews in Jerusalem. The natural inference from the Book of Ezra, which would account for the sad plight of the city as reported to Nehemiah by his brother Hanani, is that Ezra's reforms aroused the hatred of the nations whose

daughters had been treated with scorn, and they had made breaches in the city's walls.

Nehemiah's Prayer

In the year 445 B.C., Nehemiah, a Jew, was cupbearer to Artaxerxes, king of Persia. His brother Hanani and other Jews arrived at the palace of Susa from Jerusalem and told him of the distressing conditions there: how times were hard, and the people in trouble because of poor crops and persistent enemies, and how the walls of the Holy City were broken down and the gates burned and the temple neglected. Nehemiah poured out his grief to God in prayer and besought his blessing on the purpose he had in his heart and the furthering of his design by granting him mercy with the king.



A Section of the Wall around Jerusalem

Opportunity to make known his wish to the king came a few months later, when Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah the cause of his sadness. How could he be glad, Nehemiah replied, when his own city of Jerusalem was in so sorry a plight? "What is your wish?" the king questioned, and Nehemiah boldly asked to be sent to rebuild the walls. The king granted him leave of absence for this purpose, appointed him governor of Jerusalem and gave him credentials and passports and letters to the officials and an order on Asaph, the keeper of his forest, for timber. Accompanied by a military escort, he set out on his mission.

Nehemiah Arouses the Jews to the Work of Rebuilding the Walls

Nehemiah began his mission in Jerusalem with great caution. After resting three days and before telling anyone what God had put into his heart to do for Jerusalem, he rode forth in the dead of the night to view the broken city walls and the burned gates that he might understand all the difficulties of the task which awaited him. Next, he summoned the leaders of the people and told them of the God-given purpose that had brought him to the city and of authority given him by the Persian king, and urged them to undertake the work of rebuilding the wall. He received ready response: "Let us rise up and build."

The People Organized for the Work

Nehemiah skillfully divided the work. Around the wall, wherever it was broken down, he distributed forty or more groups of workers from Jerusalem and near-by cities, priests and merchants, apothecaries and goldsmiths, nobles and artisans, everyone over against his own house. All worked with zeal—"they strengthened their hands for the good work." How the work prospered amidst opposition from crafty enemies and friendly hinderers, our lesson tells.

Ezra Not Mentioned in Connection with the Rebuilding of the Walls

It is strange that Nehemiah does not mention Ezra's work in Jerusalem in connection with his account of the rebuilding of the walls. Yet neither Ezra's nor Nehemiah's records are complete. Many scholars think that the twenty-seventh

instead of the seventh year of Artaxerxes was the date of Ezra's expedition and institution of the Law—between Nehemiah's two visits in 445 and 432 B.C.—and that on Nehemiah's arrival the walls were just as they had been left by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. If Ezra came before Nehemiah, "his frustrated labor no doubt prepared the way for the latter's success."

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

"Every teacher who expects to be an achieving leader has to keep identified with the hustlers. Men of the world who hear Billy Sunday usually make this comment first of all: 'Well, anyhow, that man is terribly in earnest.' It ought to be the determination of every teacher to win at least an equal encomium." This comment with Billy Sunday as a text is quoted from a religious paper. Had Nehemiah been the text, it would be most apt for this lesson.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

CO-OPERATION IN RELIGIOUS WORK

Beginning the Lesson

The memoirs of Nehemiah present to us a record of noble endeavor, and show us what can be achieved by one man of courage and faith, whose life is ruled by unswerving allegiance to duty. They reveal Nehemiah as a man of deep feeling and tireless energy and stern resolution. He has his place in the history of revelation, not because of any profound thought on the problems of life, nor because of new insight into truths, but because of what he was enabled to do at a critical period of Israel's history. He was not a prophet who saw visions; nor a poet who interpreted the heart of man. He has no place in the long line of thinkers who have opened up new regions for the human spirit. He was rather a man of affairs, keen, practical, with genius for organization, a born leader of men, a man of iron nerve and passionate energy. He was a practical business man throwing his great capacities into work for the good of his nation.

In a time like ours, when such qualities stand so high in public estimation, and among a people like us more noted for energy than for thought, for business than for vision, it is encouraging to note how such capabilities were in Nehemiah's case used for the kingdom of heaven. All the powers that dwell within a man can find ample scope, if they be only set to noble ends. But for the consecration of these gifts he would have been nothing but a successful man of affairs, or a high-placed permanent official, or a skillful counselor at the Persian court. Because in the power of a simple faith he gave himself to a great work, he stands in the succession of prophets and psalmists and saints and apostles, having spent himself for the kingdom of God.—Hugh Black, in Listening to God.

Leader and People Coöperated in the Work

I saw the men around the Bay after the San Francisco earthquake taking hold together to rebuild the fallen city and build it better. I felt that in their attitude and purpose they, too, stood in a great and noble succession. Nehemiah, prophet and builder, rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem after the Babylonian Captivity! Marshall Field, merchant prince and builder, with Robert Collyer, prophet and inspirer, rebuilding the walls of Chciago after the great fire of 1871! Brave men of California standing undaunted in the face of the disaster unspeakable, worthy to be named in the same honored connection! They were called to be the secular instruments of the Lord's redemptive purpose, bringing order out of disorder, beauty out of ashes, peace out of confusion, and oil of joy to replace the spirit of heaviness. All honor to those resolute souls who, like this saint of old, showed themselves competent to furnish the leadership for the rebuilding of a city!

But the leaders at Jerusalem would have been powerless without the faithful co-operation of the plain people. "So built we the wall, for the people had a mind to work." Who these "people" were, how they looked, when they died, where they were buried, history does not record. They were simply the plain, untitled people whom the Lord must love since he makes so many of them. He steadily honors them in the prosecution of his great designs. From the rising of the sun until the stars appear these plain people are at work upon all the common fields of earth, myriads of them making the world better by the very way they live in it as they go about lending a hand, speaking the word of kindly cheer, smoothing the way for feet less skillful than their own.

In the minds of those Jews there was the sense of mission from on high. When their great leader and all the people took hold together they were intent upon something more than the rebuilding of a city where men might buy and sell and get gain. The restored city was to be a place touching which the Almighty might say in a supreme way, "I will place my name there." It was to be the center from which spiritual impulses would radiate even unto the ends of the earth. There was in their hearts as they laid stone upon stone the sense of mission and of co-operation with an Eternal Purpose reaching on through the ages, binding them and those who should come after them into one vast enterprise for the moral renewal of the world.—Charles R. Brown, in The Congregationalist.

The Men Who Would not Help

In the details concerning the rebuilding of the walls given in the third chapter, we are told that the nobles of the Tekoites "put not their necks to the work of the Lord." The metaphor is, of course, of oxen yoked in pairs. "I am sorry for these nobles," writes J. A. Hutton, "because the work was accomplished without them. There is surely no man more to be pitied on God's earth than the man with a chance to do a big thing who does not do it. The walls were built without them, and days afterward, when they would be out taking a walk in the evening, some good man who had done his share in the building of the walls and had forgotten all about the little discussion of the time, would encounter one of these nobles and after the usual greetings would say, 'Are not these fine walls we have now?' And then he would say, 'O, I beg your pardon. You were rather opposed to these walls.' Some nights they would be out alone and a voice would say to them: 'These are fine walls. No doubt this is a far better city than it used to be. . . .' The nobles would say 'Silence!' but the voice would go on, because that voice which reminds one of something he ought to have done is God.

"There are no more unhappy men surely in the world than men who know that there is a bit of work which they could do for the glory of God and yet refuse the high call. Henry IV of Navarre, returning from the battle of Arques and meeting one of his generals who had refused to go and fight with him and had sulked in his tent, greeted him in these words, 'Go and hang thyself. We fought at Arques and you were not there.'"

In the laws of Solon it was decreed that in the event of an insurrection breaking out in the streets of Athens, those should be put to death who merely looked on, taking no part in it, on one side or the other. It is a crime to be a mere spectator in the battle of life. Phillips Brooks laments the great multitude of useless men, and of men perfectly contented in their uselessness. "Many a man looks back upon his life, and save for the kindly offices which he has rendered to his immediate associates, he cannot remember one useful thing he ever did. He never stood up for a good cause. He never remonstrated against an evil. He never helped a bad man to be better. A merely useless man! His life might drop out of the host tomorrow and none would miss a soldier from the ranks. No onset of defense would be the weaker for his going. I know not how he reconciled it to himself."

Why the Wall of Church Unity Is Not Built

I have been looking around lately upon one or two walls which have seemed to me to be very noble and very strong in the pictures I have seen of them, but which, when I go and look at the actual thing, are merely a heap of stones lying on the ground. I had expected to see fine and colossal buildings here—walls that were so strong as to be almost impregnable—but I found that the building had scarcely been begun.

One wall I would like to mention is the wall of Church Unity. We have heard much about this wall—so much, in fact, that a great many of us are tired of its mention. Nothing ever seems to come of it. We look at one another, and at the heap of stones lying on the ground, and we say, "What a fine wall, if only someone would build it." We know why it is not built. We know that we, the bearers of the burden, have been unable to lift the stones and put them in their place. Our efforts have been ineffective because of the amount of rubbish that is lying about. How often do we sing:

Like a mighty army
Moves the Church of God;
Brothers, we are treading
Where the saints have trod.

We are not divided,
All one body we,
One in hope and doctrine
One in charity.

That is a beautiful hymn, but unfortunately, with a smug self-satisfaction, we sing it as though its sentiments were accomplished facts, whereas they can only be, at present, an ideal to aim at. "We are not divided"—"One in hope and doctrine"—why, there's hardly a single thing that all sections of the Church are united on, and, although things are far more hopeful and promising now, I know, still we have a long way to go before half of that hymn comes true. It is the Spirit of Truth on which our wall must be built, and the Spirit of Truth alone can lead us into all truth. In building the Wall of Church Unity we must first clear away the rubbish—the rubbish of self-righteousness and self-conceit—the spirit that thinks our way to be the only right way, for I believe that when we reach Heaven we shall meet a great many people we never expected to meet and they on their part will probably be surprised to see us there.

I was reading the other day a missionary magazine and came across the account of the building of a new church in Central Africa. The building was constructed of wood, with a thatched roof composed of long grasses. It was built entirely by the natives and the missionary. And I read these words: "The next day the whole Church went out to gather grass." I thought, "What a lesson to us stay-at-home Christians, with all our quibbles and our squeals!" There was Church unity if you like! The whole Church—all united. The whole Church went out to gather grass.—J. Ruskin Appleyard.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Qualities of a great leader as exemplified by Nehemiah. See chapter XI of Great Characters of the Old Testament, by Robert W. Rogers.

2. The effect of ridicule.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What two great events does the Book of Nehemiah record? 2. Why did the people weep at the reading of the Law? 3. How is it true that "the joy of Jehovah is your strength"? 4. How did the people of Berœa read the Word of God? (Acts 17.10-12.) 5. Do you read your Bible as a duty, or as a delight? 6. What is the need in our church for trained teachers? 7. Why do you not qualify?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

TEAM WORK

Beginning the Lesson

Humphrey Corners was not a very pleasant place in which to live, because it was not kept clean. One great eyesore of the place was a vacant lot, directly opposite the church, where old rubbish, bottles, tin cans, broken crockery, old shoes, etc., were thrown. But one day Lorna Conree had a real inspiration, and that very afternoon called a meeting of all the boys and girls, and the idea that she laid before them was so unusual that it "took" at once. The next morning every boy was at the dump almost before light. They wheeled soil from a vacant lot near-by and threw it here and there on the refuse heap, and then they dug up the hard earth around the edges. The next morning it was the girls who slipped out of their beds before others in the families were awake. They brought seeds and threw them by handfuls over the pile and planted them in the earth that the boys had dug up. Then they waited. At first no one but the boys and girls noticed that the seeds were pushing their way through the earth, but at last the little plants began to climb over the pile and the secret was out: somebody had been planting nasturtiums.

The next Sunday the minister's text was "Over against his own house." "I think the children have set us older folk an example which we must follow," he said. "Like the people of Nehemiah's day all the children had a mind to work, and they covered the disagreeable and unpleasant things with beauty. We, too, must work and work hard. Let us every one get right to work over against his own house and make this a clean town." And they did.

The minister's text (the account is condensed from a story by Bertha Burnham Bartlett, was taken from the third chapter of Nehemiah, which gives details of the

work on Jerusalem's walls that Nehemiah began soon after reaching the city. Who had made him governor there? How had he come to Jerusalem? What was the first thing he did after resting three days? Why? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Every One Over Against His House

Margaret was in a peck of other people's troubles. As usual, she fled to Miss Nairn.

"What in the world can I do about it?" Margaret questioned. "Everywhere people are suffering and needing help. It's so discouraging! What is anybody going to do with only one pair of hands?"

"The only thing I can think of," answered Miss Nairn, "is to follow the example of Nehemiah."

"Nehemiah? Why, he was an old Jew, wasn't he?"

"Yes." Miss Nairn smiled in spite of herself. "One of those old Jews whose stories were written down for our help and instruction. Nehemiah's problem seems to me very much worse than yours, but that doesn't prevent his example being of use to you."

"What was his problem?"

"To rebuild a ruined city in the face of powerful opposition with the aid of a small band of patriots. Conditions were so bad that people said, 'Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish that have been burned?' Jerusalem was literally in rubbish!"

"What did he do?"

"He built it up. The third chapter of his history is full of the names of the builders, and again and again significant little phrases, 'over against their house,' 'by his house,' 'every one over against his house,' and even 'over against his chamber,' appear.

"I've thought of it so often, Margaret, 'over against their own houses.' If people would take that as a motto, how it would help! Of course there must always be people to go afield, people who have a 'call' to do so and the leisure to obey. But suppose that the rest of us, who haven't time nor strength to spare for that sort of work, just start in, in the fashion of Nehemiah's helpers, 'over against our own houses.' Surely it's our first duty to build up the broken walls that we can see from our own windows. Do you see what I mean?"

Margaret nodded. "Yes, I do. More than you realize, perhaps," she said. "I just found out today that one of father's tenants is being helped by a charity organization society. That's my wall, isn't it? And our laundress has a little lame boy," she added thoughtfully. "I can see quite a good many holes in the wall right 'over against my chamber.' Though it's not very spectacular, I suppose I'd better stop those up before I go down to offer a hand in the public buildings."—The Youth's Companion.

How to Work with Others

My father was once buying a horse. The owner was telling the animal's qualities. He said: "This horse will work single or double, on the near side or on the off side, in harness or under the saddle, in the quiet of the country or the noise of the town. He will work anywhere, any way you try him, with any kind of a beast that will pull." The owner was an honest man and told the truth. Which things are a parable. Many a boy or girl will work well single, but not in a team; many will work well in harness, but will become bucking bronchos under the saddle; will work well as long as things are quiet, but when confusion comes will grow nervous and irritable over the traces; will work well where he likes to work, but not anywhere that he may be put. Here is a secret: no one can pull the world's load, or save the world or a town all by himself; nor can you always determine which side of the pole you will be on, or what kind of person will be on the other side. But you ought to be able to pull wherever you are with anybody and everybody that is pulling.—William Fraser McDowell, in Good Ministers of Jesus Christ.

Team Work in a Hospital

"There's an athlete that understands team-play," said a doctor in a hospital ward in one of our cities. He pointed to a small, frail man stretched out in bed.

"An athlete?" said the visitor. "But he's a cripple, isn't he?"

"Yes. But he used to play on a team in college. He was a fine runner, light

and swift. He was hurt for life, several years ago, in pulling a child out from under a runaway horse's hoofs. But he says now he is having the athletic contest of his life, and he's putting the whole ward in training. He says everybody has some position on the world's team, and the invalids have the hardest line of all to hold. 'If we shirk,' he says, 'how can we expect the world to move ahead? Our place is the hardest, and the team needs us.' So he has all the invalids in the ward keen on the idea. They're in training. They aren't allowed complaining, or telling of symptoms, or wondering why they have to suffer so, or hopelessness, or irritable temper. All those are crossed off from their diet, so to speak. They're athletes—on the team, each with a place to fill that counts. I tell you, that man has put a new spirit into every other fellow in the ward, and he's done more for some of the cases than any doctor could do. 'We're not outsiders. We're not flung to one side helpless, while the game goes on,' he tells the others. 'We belong! We're on the team, in the very hardest place!' It's true, too. The strongest man on the football field today isn't so strong as that bedridden athlete."

Team-play in a hospital! Yet it was perfectly possible. Not only in the beds of the ward, but in the nursing, too, for that matter, there was an opening for it. Any group of workers, any board of administration, any community, any home, is a place for team-play, a place where the opportunity waits, days after day, for the wise athlete to come along and take it. Many young men, many young women, never see it; but it is nevertheless there, and it is an opportunity to transform life, to perform each task with joy, to reach power and value, to win out instead of fail.—Forward.

A Letter Bespeaking your Team Work

It is an appreciated privilege to convey to you a message concerning the Department for Utilizing Surplus Material of the World's Sunday-School Association. Each year for a number of years frequent mention of this Department has appeared in The Guide, and thousands of letters have come from its readers asking for the name of a missionary of a particular denomination who would be glad to receive all sorts of things ranging from a picture card to a mule or an automobile, and from a card punch to a church bell. Such things have been given to thousands of missionaries by more than 38,000 co-workers in the homeland.

First, you should know that the missionaries are most appreciative of your help. They can never receive too many picture cards, and they are always begging for many more large picture rolls. Papers in English, dressed dolls, baby organs, stereopticons, slides, ribbons, watches that still have "go" in them, portable blackboards, are in the list of things for which there is constant call. Hundreds of dollars, in amounts ranging from a quarter to one thousand, have been sent to me for the purchase of helpful articles especially named by the missionaries. Would that this "Special Fund" might be increased!

Your further co-operation is requested. For a leaflet giving full information about being a foreign missionary at home and thus helping the missionaries over there, write to me as Superintendent of the Surplus Material Department, World's Sunday-School Association, 216 Metropolitan Tower, New York City. Indicate your denomination, state the things you have to give, and you will receive a card of introduction to a missionary to whom the things are to be forwarded directly. Do not send the packages to the World's office.—Yours sincerely and also on behalf of many missionaries, Samuel D. Price.

Sentence Sermons

Where there's a will, there's a way.

Prayer and faith do not lead to inactivity and sloth.—F. B. Meyer.

I am only one,
But still I am one.
I cannot do everything,
But I can do something.
And because I cannot do everything,
I shall not refuse to do the something I can do.—Edward Everett Hale.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. How long did the people listen to the reading of the Law? 2. Why did the people weep? 3. How did the leaders comfort them? 4. Why should religion make one joyous? 5. Do you read your Bible? 6. What do you gain from reading it?

TEACHING THE LAW OF GOD

GOLDEN TEXT: The opening of thy words giveth light. Psalm 119.130

LESSON Nehemiah 8.1-18 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 119.97-104

NEHEMIAH 8.1 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded to Israel. 2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read therein before the broad place that was before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women, and of those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were *attentive* unto the book of the law.

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 And Ezra blessed Jehovah, the great God; and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground.

8 And they read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading.

9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest, the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; for the joy of Jehovah is your strength. 11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. 12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE READING OF THE LAW BY EZRA, verses 1-8. The first day of the seventh month is the day which from the time of Alexander the Great has been celebrated by the Jews as their New Year's Day. On this day occurred the festival known as the Feast of Trumpets, which was observed with special rites: see Lev. 23.24, 25; Num. 29.1-6. In the year 445 B.C., on this day (Neh. 7.73), the people of Jerusalem assembled in the broad place before the water gate, and Ezra, the priest and scribe, read to them the Book of the Law of Moses. "In Ezra the title of 'scribe' came to mean 'the man of the book.' It is evident that the scribes were the nearest originals of the clergy of later times" (Dean Stanley). Exactly to what the phrase, the Book of the Law of Moses, refers is a disputed question among scholars. The entire Pentateuch, some believe; the legislative portions only of the Pentateuch, others maintain.

Ezra stood upon a wooden platform above the people and was aided by thirteen Levites, who gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. Evidently Ezra read the Law sentence by sentence, and briefly expounded it, and then the Levites made the explanation clear to the people. Men, women, and children, old enough to understand, listened attentively to the reading from early morning until midday. On account of the heat they had their customary rest during the noon hour. To the reading the people responded with Amen, Amen (So be it), with a lifting up of the hands, evidently with the palms upward in supplication for the divine blessing, and then they bowed their heads and worshiped Jehovah with their faces to the ground.

"We should learn the lesson taught by the waiting crowd, prone on their faces and blessing God for his Word. A reverential attitude must ever precede reading it, if we are to read aright" (Alexander Maclaren).

II. THE EFFECT OF THE READING OF THE LAW, verse 9. "By Ezra's inspiration and under his guidance the Law was now for the first time put before the Jews in such a way as to convince them that it was the most important thing in the world that their lives should be conducted wholly in accordance with its precepts" (A. S. Peake). The people evidently had not known the requirements of the Law, and they wept when they realized how they had transgressed it. Recall King Josiah's contrition on hearing the Book of the Law read for the first time.

"The priestly circles would be in possession of traditions, usages, and even written documents, but such knowledge was clearly not the property of the people" (John E. McFadyen). Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest, and the Levites said to the people: "This day is holy unto Jehovah your God; mourn not, nor weep." The day was holy because it was the day of the new moon and of the blowing of trumpets, and also because of the reading of the Law.

III. THE PEOPLE COMFORTED, verses 10-12. "Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet," counseled Nehemiah, using a proverbial expression meaning "Do not fast nor mourn." "And send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared."

"The best way to create joy in our own hearts is to set ourselves to create it in others. It is not enough to eat the fat and drink the sweet in our own selfish little corner; we must send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared. In every circle there are many who look across a desolate world, which has no reassuring smile, no greeting voice, no loving or loyal heart. Look out for these. They hide for the most part like wounded game in the thicket. Go forth to be a joy-bringer to such as sit in darkness and the shadow of death" (F. B. Meyer).

Worshiping with Face to the Ground

"Neither be ye grieved," Nehemiah continued; "for the joy of Jehovah is your strength." The preposition *of* here has a causative force. Dr. Jowett speaks of "the water of the Welsh hills," that is to say, "the water whose springs and gathering ground are found in Wales," and then similarly of "the joy of Jehovah" as meaning "the joy that flows out of the Godhead like a river, a joy that has its springs nowhere else." It is a joy that is found in God; in God we have to seek it. And its ministry is to give us strength.

"And does not joy make us strong? What nimbleness joy gives to the feet! The sad heart wearies in a mile, the joyful heart is fresh and exuberant at the end of the tenth mile. 'He maketh my feet like hinds' feet.' How exultant and joyful must the Psalmist's heart have been! He felt ready for anything. Just as we sometimes say, when the heart is glad and sunny, that we feel we could jump over the moon. Yes, joy makes us strong" (J. H. Jowett).

And the Levites stilled the people, saying, "Hold your peace, for the day is holy." It was an ill-omen to use words or signs of lamentation on a feast day, Hab. 2.20. And all the people obeyed. They kept the festival with mirth, rejoicing especially because they had heard and understood the words of the Law.

"If, then, the joy of the Lord is a man's strength, it must be a bounden duty to cultivate it, and with God's help, enlarge it. The man is sinful as well as unwise who holds stubbornly by sorrow and depression."

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

And they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading, verse 8. For a century and a half the national life of Judah had been suppressed. For nearly five generations those who had remained in Judah had been mingling with the heathen and had learned their language. Hebrew had become to them by this time almost a strange tongue. We know how the Alexandrian Jews united to supply the Greek

version of the Scriptures, the Septuagint, for their countrymen, to whom Greek had become their mother-tongue. In the East, by the Tigris and the Euphrates, the change was even more rapid, and the cognate dialect of Chaldee (in which language parts of Ezra, Daniel, and other post-exilic inspired books are written) became within two generations the colloquial medium of the exiles. Another cognate tongue, the Syrian, or Aramaic, had supplemented Hebrew in the Holy Land itself; and the language of Moses was little less strange to the Chaldee-speaking exile of the return, or to the peasant of Judea, than Latin was to the Italian five hundred years ago—not utterly unintelligible, but rendering needful to give the sense.—H. B. Tristam, in Bible Manners and Customs.

Send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared, verse 10. This has generally been interpreted to mean that the wants of the poor were to be supplied; but Harmer prefers to refer it to the custom of sending a portion of a feast to those who cannot well come to it, especially to the relatives of those who give the feast and to those in a state of mourning, who in their grief would make no preparation. In Nehemiah it may mean a mutual exchange of the good things provided for the feast.—James M. Freeman, in Bible Manners.

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Between the Rebuilding of the Walls and the Reading of the Law

Apparently, Nehemiah returned to Susa, Persia, and then, twelve years after his first coming, came back as governor with the royal authority of the King of Persia back of him. It was during his governorship that the solemn reading of the Law took place.

The Broad Place Before the Gate

The streets of Jerusalem today are very narrow, just as they always have been, most of them resembling alleys rather than streets. The only place where a large company can assemble is at "a broad place," or open square, or beyond the city walls. The water gate was on the east facing the Kidron Valley, so-called because through it the water-carriers entered the city from Gihon, or the Virgin's Spring as it is now called. It was at the broad place before this gate that all the people gathered themselves together as one man to hear the reading of the Law.

The Gateway of a City

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

The number of Bibles sold every year would lead one to suppose that our people are great students of the scriptures. Yet the almost universal ignorance of the Bible proves that it is one thing to own a Bible, and quite another thing to read it. We may buy the Bible because other people own Bibles, because we believe in its principles, and because it seems altogether desirable to have the Bible among our collection of books. But the extent to which we read the Bible depends on our interest in it and the truths with which it deals.

Let each teacher of religion therefore ask himself: "To what extent am I grounding in my pupils a permanent and continuing interest in the Bible and in the Christian religion? Growing out of lessons I teach them, are they coming to like

the Bible? Will they want to know more about it? Will they turn to it naturally as a matter of course because they have found it interesting and helpful? Will they care enough for it through the years to search for its deeper meanings and for its hidden beauties? And because of this will they build the strength and inspiration of the Bible increasingly into their lives?"—George Herbert Betts, in How to Teach Religion.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE CALL FOR TRAINED TEACHERS

Beginning the Lesson

This Bible reading reminds us of scenes which used to take place in days before the wide distribution of Bibles placed a copy in every man's hand. When the Bible was first permitted to be read in public in England in the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign, a copy was placed in St. Paul's Cathedral, and "many well-disposed people used to resort much to the hearing thereof, especially when they could get any that had an audible voice to read to them. One John Porter used to occupy himself in this godly exercise and great multitudes would resort to hear him." This from an old chronicle gives the nearest approach in recent times to this ancient scene in the streets of Jerusalem.—F. B. Meyer, in The Right Kind of Bible Teaching.

A Rabbi Reading the Law

The right kind of Bible teaching is shown in our text in a nutshell. It was for all, men, women and children. They were, no doubt, in "graded" groups, each under the leadership of one of the Levites, verse 7. It was a model school, for they were not only willing but eager—the request for the reading came from them to Ezra. The classes were interested, attentive (verse 3), reverent verses (5, 6), responsive (verse 6). The Scripture was explained so that every one understood its meaning. So clearly was it expounded, and so impressively was it taught, that its truth touched their consciences, made them see how far short they had come of fulfilling its commands. The effects of the teaching did not stop with penitence, for knowledge led to worship and service.

The Importance of the Regular Use of the Bible

We are to remember that decision for the Christian life means the opening of the life to God, and that its continuance, consequently, depends on keeping the life so open to this new, greatest transforming, personal relation. And keeping the life so open depends, in its turn, above all, on regular Bible study. He who keeps such study steadily going is practically certain to maintain his Christian life and to grow intelligently in it. He who does not is pretty certain finally to fail.

The reasons for this central importance of the Scripture can be seen from different points of view. For if one starts from the idea of environment, we must remember that the part of our environment affects us to which we attend. And probably the greatest way in which we can be sure to put ourselves within reach of a strong spiritual environment is through regular Bible study. Moreover, the mind readily recurs to its habitual objects of thought. And it is these habitual objects of

thought which are certain to dominate the life. If we are habitually turning, thus, to the great moral and spiritual resources of the Scripture, we have the right to count on a deepening spiritual life.

Or, if we look at the matter from the point of view of personal association, the universal law to be recognized is that we become like those with whom we constantly are, to whom we voluntarily surrender ourselves, and who give themselves unreservedly to us. Now, the Scripture offers us, in pre-eminent degree, just such association. It allows us to come into close, personal contact with God-touched men,—those to whom and through whom God has most effectively spoken. We have here the opportunity of sharing their visions, and so of being introduced, through these greatest seers, into some of the depths of the spiritual world. Here, too, in the Scripture is the record of the pre-eminent meetings of God with men, into which it is possible for us to enter.

And the Scripture gives us, as does nothing else, the possibility of laying the foundation of a true, personal relation with God. For it is a record of his dealings with men, and such a revelation of him as makes possible our answering trust. It calls out again and again our self-surrender in particulars. And it brings us into some community interest with God in Christ. As we thus give time to our Bible study, we are entering into the transforming association with God, which must be the main factor in deepening our acquaintance with him; and to come really to know God is life eternal.—Henry Churchill King, in Letters to Teachers.

The Call for Trained Teachers

The investment of life is a matter that presents itself with peculiar and compelling emphasis to young men and women who stand at the hour of life decision. At a time when our world is so palpably in the remaking, when the downward pull of commercialism and of greed is so appalling; and when the need and value of forces that lift and build up are so great, our hope and our appeal is that our young people shall see the true meaning and the larger values of life, and shall make their investment accordingly. The supreme values of the kingdom of God; the higher and richer returns of the life invested in service; the surer and truer success of the life that is dedicated to the upbuilding and the betterment of the world, these are the higher calls to the mind and heart of youth—these are the supreme values which when understood will captivate and command the allegiance of the young Christian so that he shall scorn to throw his life away upon lesser and meaner aims.

Among the fields of largest investment and the calls to greatest service today is that of the Christian ministry—the call to preach the gospel. The office of the Christian ministry has never been more challenging. The sheer bigness of the task of the Church, the transforming power of the gospel in the individual and in all the activities of society, was never more apparent to discerning minds.

But even aside from the more obvious results of his work, the preacher and prophet of the gospel of Christ is among the most dynamic and constructive leaders of our modern world. He is making for its truer and its larger life. He is a guide to those who are in darkness and a bulwark to those who are in moral confusion and uncertainty, and as such his influence is incalculable in our civilization. His value as an enheartener of the discouraged, as a stabilizer of the moral forces of the community and of the nation, means far more to our civilization than the unthinking ordinarily realize.

Thousands of pulpits are vacant today, and thousands of other pulpits are occupied by men who can fill them but inadequately. There is no need of the Church or of our civilization more urgent at the present hour than this, that the strongest and most gifted young men of our day shall respond to the call of God and shall invest their lives in the work of the Christian ministry.

Preaching as we know it from our churches and from pulpits is only one way of preaching. Preaching in its broader sense may not be distinguished from teaching the gospel. The form of presentation is incidental. The great commission to the Church of Christ is to teach—that is, so to bring the gospel into relation with the minds and hearts of men that they may see it and may yield themselves to it—may live it.

In this sense the medical missionary is a preacher and a teacher of the gospel. He is this both in his living ministry to the bodies of men by which he expresses the very spirit of his Master, and also by such words of instruction and exhortation as he may find the opportunity to utter, and by which he seeks to inform the mind and comfort the hearts of men.

The same thing is true of the missionary teacher who in the mission school may instruct in English or mathematics, or some other subject, but who first of all is a teacher of Christ. So we think, and rightly think, of all our missionaries, medical, educational, industrial, literary and evangelistic. They are above all else preachers and teachers of the gospel. They are successors of the apostles and of the missionaries of the last nineteen hundred years. They are the builders of the kingdom of God. They have invested their lives for the things which are most worth living for and most worth dying for.

But here, again, in missionary work the need for laborers is far greater than the response to the call. With the cry of human need in every land ringing in our ears, and with practically the entire world open to the gospel and asking for more missionaries, more doctors, more teachers, more evangelists—more strong, well-equipped men and women to lead the Christian forces in non-Christian lands—and with all of the mission boards sounding the call for recruits, the supply is vastly below the urgent demand. The great churches which are enlarging their missionary programs in view of the world-wide opportunity of today are saying very frankly that this enlarged program cannot be carried out unless young men and young women shall offer themselves by the thousands for investment in these fields of incalculable returns. To this situation we ask our young people to give most careful and prayerful attention before deciding their life work. Here is an unsurpassed opportunity for those whom God needs and calls to this service.

God is offering to the layman unprecedented opportunities for service, and nowhere perhaps is there a field of such large and sure returns as in the church school. The teaching and religious guidance of the young is today largely in the hands of unordained men and women. Here the Church of the future is being determined. Here the Church has her supreme opportunity to lay the foundations of the kingdom of God. Surely this work is second in importance, when viewed in the light of its possible returns, to no other in all the world, and surely God means that this work shall be taken up by many thousands of those who seek to make investment of their lives according to his will.

In the work of religious education many will be salaried workers in positions which provide for their full time service. A still larger proportion will be unsalaried and can give only a portion of their time to this work. Yet they may give that time none the less as a response to the call of God and as an investment in the kingdom of God.

The hope of the kingdom, in large measure, is in the service, financially unremunerated, of those who shall hear the great call of God to help provide adequately for the religious education of an entire generation, and shall invest their lives in this field of incalculable returns.—Condensed from an article in The Church School, by John W. Shackford.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. We believe that the most strategic thing a pastor can do is to persuade his congregation to read the Bible. Any individual or any institution that could take the Bible to every home in this country would do more for the country than all the armies from the beginning of history to the present time.—Chief Justice Brewer.

2. How church members listen to the reading of the Word.

3. Great Bible Schools.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What do we know about Malachi? 2. What indication of the time the Book of Malachi was written is given in Mal. 1.8? 3. What was the purpose of the book? 4. What is said about the Levites in Mal. 1.6-14? 5. How might the sojourner be oppressed? 6. What was the law in reference to tithes? (Lev. 27.30-32; Num. 18.21-24.) 7. What does Prov. 3.9, 10 say about giving? 8. How can a man rob God other than in not giving money?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

FINDING JOY IN GOD'S WORD

Beginning the Lesson

There is a little community in Pennsylvania that appreciates the value of Bible study. When the population of Roaring Spring was two thousand, three hundred and

seventy-nine, of this number two thousand, three hundred and twenty were members of the several church schools. Ninety-seven per cent of the entire population enrolled as students of the Bible on Sundays: is this not a remarkable record? Do you know what percentage of the people in your community attend its church schools? Are you pleased with the record? What can you do to improve it?

We hear in our lesson today of a remarkable gathering of a whole city—men, women and children—to hear the Word of God read. Who were the leaders of this meeting? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Women Who Found Joy in Reading the Bible

A missionary from New Mexico writes: "There joined a little Mexican church one spring an old woman of seventy years, and all summer, as she came every evening for the teacher to read to her from the Bible, she sighed because she could not read the Book herself. When the school opened the teacher was surprised to find this old woman asking for admission. The teacher said, 'There is no room; besides I don't believe that, with your mind untrained to retain it, you can master the reading. I fear I cannot take you.' Nothing daunted, she went away, found a little box which she placed outside the schoolroom door, and there she sat, day in and day out, and as the children passed to and fro she would hold up her Bible, saying, 'Can you tell me this word? What is this letter? Read me this.' And so she learned to read. During the three following years of her life almost any time you could see her going from house to house reading God's word to other less fortunate neighbors. Many times she would start out early on Monday morning, going far into the mountains, where the missionary had scarcely penetrated, coming back on Saturday evening footsore and weary. There came down to that mission during those three years thirty-seven men and women asking to be taught, asking to walk in the 'Jesus way.' When asked how they had heard of him, they would say, 'Why, Dona Aleja read it to us.'"

Grandma Pettit's Application of Nehemiah's Words

"Trouble with Maria," said Grandma Pettit, "is that she goes against scripture and breaks one of the commandments."

"O Grandma, Maria doesn't steal or lie or murder, surely," exclaimed a shocked listener.

"I didn't say she did," was the decisive answer. "There are more than ten commandments. I was thinking of one my mother used to quote, one by the mouth of Nehemiah, not Moses. She used to say that those who did not have a good time in this world, disobeyed the commandment, 'Drink the sweet!' There is something sweet at one time or another for everybody, and there's no need to go drinking a bitter cup the whole time. Sometimes the Lord does put it to the lips, and then people must 'take it with both hands and drink it'; they'll find comfort at the bottom of the cup. But to go exploring round as Maria does for all sorts of worriments and testing of every cup that looks a mite bitter, is what I don't believe in. 'Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet,' is what Nehemiah says, and after he had tasted plenty of bitter, too."

"But there does seem to be a great deal of bitter, after all," sighed one.

"Some folks hunt it up and drink it themselves when there's no need," said grandma significantly.

"Poison not thy wine with bitter herbs when God hath made it sweet," quoted a hitherto silent listener.

Grandma Pettit looked up approvingly: "No, don't," she said.—The Wellspring.

Sentence Sermons

In the Word of God I find not merely strength and comfort, but intense intellectual satisfaction.—Captain Mahan.

I would not now exchange for any amount of money the acquaintance with the Bible that was drummed into me when a boy.—Eugene Field.

Understandest thou what thou readest?—Philip.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. How many chapters are there in Malachi? 2. What is its position in the Bible? 3. What do we owe God? 4. Do you give a tithe or more to the work of Jehovah? 5. Do we ever need to return unto God? 6. How may we return?

MALACHI FORETELLS A NEW DAY

GOLDEN TEXT: Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. Malachi 3.1

LESSON—Malachi 1.1 to 4.6 DEVOTIONAL READING Isaiah 11.1-10

MALACHI 3.1 Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts. 2 But who can abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: 3 and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jehovah offerings in righteousness. 4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jehovah, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years. 5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner *from his right*, and fear not me, saith Jehovah of hosts. 6 For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

7 From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return? 8 Will a man rob God? yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough *to receive it*. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast its fruit before the time in the field, saith Jehovah of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith Jehovah of hosts.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE COMING OF THE LORD IN JUDGMENT, verses 1-6. In the preceding verse the prophet represents the people of Judah as complaining that the wicked please God, that God is not just in prospering them while they, the righteous, suffer. "Where is the God of Justice?" they ask. Now the prophet represents God as replying to them and encouraging them with a message of hope. "Behold, I send my messenger." The word "Malachi" means "my messenger"; it has probably become the title of the book because of its use here in this verse. "He will prepare the way before me." Recall our lesson from Isaiah 40, whence this statement is thought to have been borrowed. Zechariah (8.3) had promised that Jehovah would come to his temple, and our prophet assures the people that he, the messenger of the covenant, who is part of the covenant or agreement with his people, will suddenly come.

"To those who believe in a God who governs human thought, and prepares his own way before his face, it will not be hard to believe that this element in prophecy is, indeed, a coming event casting its shadow before. The stretching out of human hands in hope and desire, and the coming of the Unspeakable Gift in the fulness of time, were parts of the same process. During the world's morning twilight of expectation God took many an elect soul up the watchtower with him, that he and they might look together at the kindling East and tell others the signs of promise which they saw upon the sky. And when Christ came, it was not hard for him to find in many psalms and prophecies things concerning himself" (J. M. E. Ross).

"The birth of Jesus is the sunrise of the Bible. Toward this point the aspirations of the prophets and the poems of the psalmists were directed as the heads of flowers are turned toward the dawn. From this point a new day began to flow silently over the world,—a day of faith and freedom, a day of hope and love. When we remember the high meaning that has come into human life and the clear light that has flooded softly down from the manger-cradle in Bethlehem of Judea, we do not wonder that mankind has learned to reckon history from the birth of Jesus, and to date all events by the years before or after the Nativity of Christ" (J. E. Vandyke).

He will come as Judge, the prophet reminds them, and who among them was ready to be judged? He will separate, as it were, the pure metal among the people

from the dross, the evil from the good, as soap separates the dirt from the cloth. The judgment will begin with the sons of Levi, the Levites who ministered in the temple.

"How much dross is there in the people of God, how their very virtues, prayers and good works are mingled with inferior elements!" (W. L. Watkinson).

He will refine them as gold and silver are refined, and they will offer righteous offerings to Jehovah. Read the prophet's rebuke of the priests for their impious offerings, 1.6-14. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto Jehovah, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years. He idealizes the past.

Then these people who were content with themselves are charged with sundry sins—sorcery, adultery, false swearing, greed. "'I have loved you, and do love you, I have loved you, saith the Lord.' Every message of coming judgment or blessing is a message of love,—whether spoken in words that sound hard and harsh and severe, revealing to them their true condition, or in words of tenderness and comfort and wooing pathos."

"The severest words of God to man, and his severest treatment, manifest most perfectly his unvarying and unchanging love. Let your mind go back quickly over the history of God's people, Israel. Richard Le Gallienne has written a book, 'If I Were God.' I have often read the history of the ancient people and felt 'if I were God' they would have been blotted out. How conclusively that proves that neither Mr. Le Gallienne nor I know of what we talk when we propose such an hypothesis. Let us always confess when we cannot understand his methods that it is because we are finite, and he is infinite" (G. Campbell Morgan).

For I, Jehovah, change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. The One Volume Commentary says that the Hebrew means "but you," the argument seeming to be, "I have not changed, but you have not kept your part of the covenant; you have not performed my words."

"It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, truth is so:
That, howsoe'er I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip, thou dost not fall" (Arthur Hugh Clough).

II. AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE, verses 7-12. Through many generations Judah had sinned, and now they were reaping the fruits of their sin. "Return unto me, keep my ordinances, and I will return unto you" was the message from God given through the prophet Malachi. "Wherein shall we return?" In what respects have we not obeyed thee? the people question, being represented here, as often through the Book of Malachi, as answering back, instead of accepting reproof. See 1.2, 6, 7; 2.14, 17; 3.8, 13.

"There may be some sins which we do not know about and yet we are conscious that our lives are not right with God. A friend of mine started to row one day, and he took hold of the oars and tried to move the boat. It would not go. He pulled harder and harder, and still the boat would not move. He jerked out one oar and tried to push the boat off. Still it would not leave the wharf. Finally he looked down and saw a rope holding the boat beneath the water. So it is here and there with people—some secret strand, it may be of pride, of indifference, of selfishness, is binding us to the shore. May we not with sincerity and earnestness offer this prayer: 'Search me, O God'—there will then be searching indeed—'and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me—then lead me in the way everlasting'" (John R. Mott).

"Will a man rob God?" The prophet uses the question for the sake of emphasis; it calls for an emphatic negative answer. "Yet ye rob me," as shown in Mal. 1.6-14. "Wherein have we robbed thee?" And the answer is, "In tithes and offerings": see Lev. 27.30-32; Num. 18.21-24. "In our temptation to see in this a purely legal spirit, let us remember that the neglect to pay the tithes was due to a religious cause, unbelief in Jehovah, and that the return to belief in him could not, therefore,

be shown in a more practical way than by the payment of tithes" (George Adam Smith).

We are not purposeful embezzlers, but do we never rob God by withholding our money or talent, or time, from his service? Members of the Mormon Church are strictly required to give one-tenth of their income to the spread of their faith. How much of his income does the average Christian give for the spread of Christianity? Do you know what proportion of your income you are giving to good causes? The amount is impressed upon you once a year when you make out your income tax returns, but do you know what proportion it bears to your net receipts? Are you proud of the figures?

"Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, even this whole nation." The curse which had been threatened: Mal. 2.2; Dt. 28.15-68; Lev. 26.14-33; and verse eleven of our lesson.

"Bring ye the whole tithe, the Lord's full share, into the store-house, that they may be found in my house." "The store-house may have been the 'great chamber' or 'lean-to' surrounding the second temple on three sides, and consisting of three stories, each containing several rooms, which had been perverted from its original purpose as a receptacle of the tithes and offerings, and assigned by the high priest to Tobiah, but which Nehemiah had restored to its proper use again (Neh. 10.38; 13.5-9, 12, 13). It is not improbable that the chambers which abutted to the height of three stories in the walls of Solomon's temple, were intended in like manner for store-houses (1 K. 6.5, 6). In the great reformation under Hezekiah such chambers were 'prepared,' either built or restored, in some part of the temple area to receive the enormous influx of tithes and offerings" (Peronne).

"And prove me now herewith, test me, see that I am the rewarder of the good, see if I will not open the heavens, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The abundance promised was of rain, it is natural to infer from verses eleven and twelve.

"The lattices of Heaven are open, not to pour down, as of old, fiery destruction, but to make way for the gentle descent of God's blessing, which will more than fill every vessel set to receive it. This is the universal law, not always fulfilled in increase of outward goods, but in the better riches of communion and of large power in God himself" (Alexander Maclaren).

"And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes," the locusts or other pests that devoured the grain: Joel 1.4; Amos 4.2. "And all nations shall call you happy for ye shall be a delightsome land." See Isa. 62.4.

"How wonderful the history of Israel—victor with God! First a band of westward emigrants, then a horde of escaped slaves, then a host of conquering warriors out of the desert; then crushed and ground into captivity; thence, after seventy years, to return with songs and outburst of poetry, prophecy, and wisdom; then, after flowering in the Messiah, withered and dead down to the roots; then all that was visible crushed and ground under Rome's world empire, and scattered as dust to the winds,—that is the story of the Hebrew people. And yet Israel's gift to the world is unique, deathless, unmatched in value. Out of Israel came the moral law, prophecy, the eternal word, the Teacher of nations, the Savior of mankind, our Exemplar and inspiration, the word of God which liveth and abideth forever" (William Elliot Griffis).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the sojourner from his right, and fear not me, verse 5. The hireling was oppressed by not giving him the wages agreed upon, or by postponing the payment that meant the daily bread of himself and family. These simple people, often too ignorant or indolent for skilled labor, live from hand to mouth and sleep peacefully, saying with regard to the morrow, "The Lord will provide." The man who fears God understands this, and is on his guard in dealing with them. When a man has to administer the estate of a deceased brother, he may be tempted by the inexperience of the widow and the ignorance of the children to use the money for his own benefit, or make it appear that it was invested and lost. But there is one who cannot be thus cheated, and the oriental understands what follows when he is

cheated in turn by others, or family cares multiply, or a beloved son dies or stumbles on the way of life. The sojourner in a locality might be an Israelite or Gentile, but being only an individual with his family he had no relatives to support him and retaliate when he was oppressed. His harvest-field might be grazed upon with impunity, or doubly taxed without redress, his vineyard robbed, his camel or mule taken for temporary government service, or he might be intimidated and compelled to sell his house and land to a resident who wished to buy them.—George M. Mackie.

Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings, verse 8. "The most barbarous natives and the heathen Greeks and Romans, out of a principle of religion common to all men, have often dedicated their tithes to their gods. Some have made it a standing obligation. Laertius says that when Pisistratus, tyrant at Athens, wrote to Solon to persuade him to return to Athens, he told him that 'Everyone there pays the tithe of his goods for the offering of sacrifices to the gods.' Pliny says that the Arabian merchants who traded in spices dared not sell any till they had paid the tithe to their god Sabis. And Plutarch, in more places than one, mentions a custom of the Romans of offering to Hercules the tithe of what they took from their enemies."

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Book of Malachi

We know nothing about the writer. The name Malachi means "my messenger," and some scholars believe, as already stated, that it was taken from the most striking prophecy of the book, the first verse of our lesson. Haggai and Zechariah prophesied in connection with the building of the temple. Malachi evidently prophesied in connection with the reforms of Nehemiah, or the reference to the "governor" of Judah, 1.6, indicates that Judah was at this time a province of the Persian Empire; the temple had long since been rebuilt; and the evils denounced are the same as these with which Nehemiah contended.

The temple and its services were the center of the religious life, and the sins of priests and people that the prophet denounces are the unpaid tithes, imperfectly fulfilled vows, disobedience to the ritual precepts of the Law, the shirking or indifferent observations of the sacrificial functions of the priests. But with the gloom of the worship at Jerusalem there are gleams of the universal worship of a changeless God and Father: "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles," 1.11; "Have we not one Father? hath not one God created us?" 2.10. The prophet has faith that upon the faithful "the sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings." He remembers Moses and expects Elijah; he looks back to the great past and forward to a greater future.

Save for the bright flashes here and there the book has rather a scholastic air, an argumentative, matter-of-fact way of putting things. The regular formula is first a statement of a principle or a denunciation, then an imaginary objection from those addressed, followed by the prophet's refutation of their objections and his warning or promise.

Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets and some one has compared his book to a late evening which closes a long day, but it is at the same time the morning twilight which bears in its bosom a glorious day.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

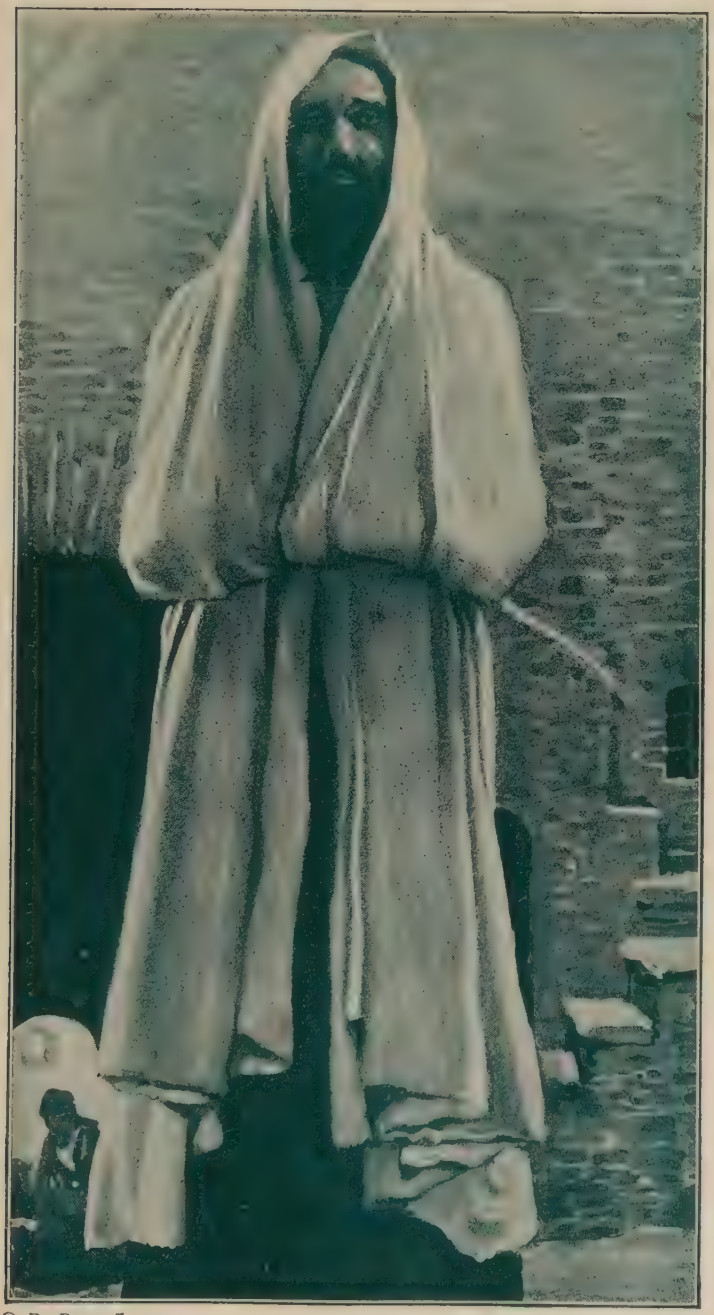
When Mr. Micawber gave an I.O.U. for a debt he uttered a sigh of relief and exclaimed, "That's provided for!" Seemingly the Jews who asked, "Wherein have we robbed God?" were as ready to acknowledge their indebtedness and as far from purposing to do anything about it. A great danger of church school teaching lies just here: pupils may be led to see the evil of wrongdoing and the good of righteousness, but not be led to avoid the one and bring forth the fruits of the other.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD

Beginning the Lesson

A rich young ruler came to Jesus one day inquiring what more he must do to be saved: what did he say in regard to his keeping of the law? He was confident that he had done all the law required. The Pharisees were satisfied that they were very



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MALACHI (*J. J. TISSOT*)

Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts.—Malachi 3. 7.

religious; they thought of religion as a matter of mere outward observance. There was the beginning of that spirit in the people after the exile. As far as they knew they were doing all that the law required. The prophet Malachi recognized that spirit: how is it shown in our lesson text? He bids them return to God, and they answer, "Wherein shall we return?" He tells them that they have robbed God, and they say, "Wherein have we robbed him?" "Your words have been stout against the Lord," the prophet cried, and "What have we spoken against him?" is their retort. Their answer to each indictment is "Not guilty."

What do we know about Malachi the prophet? About the Book of Malachi?

The Coming of the Kingdom of Righteousness

Malachi was contemporary with Ezra and Nehemiah. He is thought by some to have been Ezra himself. His message appears to have been directed towards offering a spiritual reformation among the builders of new Palestine. In this hope lay the sole justification of all that had been accomplished by the returned exiles. "Despite the successful building of the new temple, there had ensued a period of moral and religious degeneration that threatened the whole future of the people. An unworthy priesthood and an indifferent community were even worse enemies than those who from without threatened the political existence of Israel. It is with the latter foe that Malachi's message first deals (chap. 1). In the second chapter he addresses his message chiefly to the priestly house. There were the great obstacles to Ezra's attempted reformation. The High-Priest had become allied by the marriage of his son with Sanballat, the Samaritan—the arch enemy of the reformation. And it was particularly inter-marriage that was sapping the life-blood—the spiritual welfare of the people. Then in the third chapter, Malachi prophesies the establishment of the ultimate kingdom of righteousness—goal of Israel's seers—a fitting ending to that long session of efforts of lofty minds towards the betterment of their race and of the world. The unchanging righteousness of God will find expression once again in the lives of his people universally acclaimed as the happy people of a delightsome land."

How Malachi Would Have the Way of the Lord Prepared

See Explanations and Comments.

The Refiner's Work

The refining of metals by modern scientific methods is a very different process from the primitive ways which the prophet Malachi knew; but in the unchanging East you may still see men refining gold and silver just as they did in Old Testament times. You walk through the bazaars of Damascus or Cairo and come on a man sitting cross-legged in his little booth, shaping his gold and silver with no agent but a charcoal fire, kept aflame by a bellows which he works with his foot. "He shall sit," says the prophet, "as a refiner and purifier of silver," and, as the New Testament adds, "The fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." And how does the refiner know when his work is done? He knows it, so they say in the East, by looking down into the molten mass, and seeing the image of his own face reflected from the fire as from a mirror. When the undistorted image of the refiner looks back at him out of the flame, it tells him that his work of purifying is done.

Is not that a picture of the way in which God refines many a soul? One's life is a confused mass of precious and worthless stuff, of gold and dross. It is thrown into the furnace of experience, and the fire of trouble or work or trial tests it. Sometimes the soul cries out against this painful process, but there is no gentle way of refining precious metal. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: because it shall be revealed by fire." The process which scourges is the process which purifies. "I have refined thee," says another prophet, ". . . in the furnace of affliction." And when is this refining process at last complete? It is when the Master, looking down upon the life thus tested, finds his own image formed within the heart.

We speak of a face as full of refinement, and some such faces, no doubt, were born with this look of graciousness and peace. The refined life is, as a rule, however, the product of fire. It is purged as gold and silver is purged, by the refiner's flame. You have seen some persons who began their lives without beauty, and who acquired in later years a certain charm of face. What was it that made them grow beautiful as they grew older? It was their refinement by fire. The pure metal had been discovered by the very heat which seemed to consume it, and

when the Refiner looked down upon the life he had been shaping, he was met by a new refinement in its face. Pure metal responds to this searching test, and many a life which had thought its experience too fiery to bear looks up at last and says, "I am satisfied, for I awake in thy likeness." Then the Refiner knows that his work is done.—Francis Greenwood Peabody, in Mornings in the College Chapel.

The Need of the Refiner's Work

Do not shrink from anything that is involved in the Old Testament metaphor of God as the refiner sitting over against the pot above the fire, watching his precious metals as they boil, until at last he gets the dross all separated from the pure gold. There are some lines in In Memoriam that put the great picture:

"For life is not as idle ore,
But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot in burning fears,
And dipped in baths of hissing tears
And battered with the stroke of doom
To shape and use."

We may be sure that God is over against every life, mercifully burning out from it the dross and the waste and everything that is untrue and would mar the value of his precious gold in its abiding preciousness forever.—Robert E. Speer.

When Ours Shall Be a Delightsome Land

A delightsome land in the mind of God is acknowledged happy by the nations. How is it that the world is so sick and tired of Christianity? How is it that men outside the Church have come to look upon us with disdain? Is it not so? You business men, tell me, is there not a sort of pity in the heart of scores of worldly men for Christian men today? Why is this? It is the fault of the Church, of the people themselves, not the creed. "Give me," said John Wesley, "a hundred men who love God with all their hearts, and fear nothing but sin, and I will move the world." People who saw and mocked them in the early days grew to love them and came to say: "These people have what we have not; we will go with them, for God is with them."

Again and again God has raised up a despised and unknown people to render concrete the blessings of his Kingdom and Government; and where this has been done the world has said, "This is a delightsome land." And where the world has ceased to say that, it is because the people have wandered away from him. Brethren, if the Church of Jesus Christ in this land returned to the Kingdom tomorrow morning, and every one of its members returned to the Kingship of Jesus Christ, the whole country would be impressed straightway, and within one twelvemonth would say, "These are the people, this is the delightsome land, these the men and women of delights."

Some one says to me: "What do you mean by returning to the Kingdom? Everything divided, having all things in common?" I mean one thing when I say returning to the Kingdom. Let them return to love, to the love "that suffereth long and is kind—that thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things." Love like that, and you will never say a bitter thing about an absent neighbor! You will never suffer an unkind thing to be said about some one "afar off." That is the place to begin, and if the Church of Jesus Christ did but reveal his will in all its breadth, and beauty of love, the nations would begin to say, "This is a delightsome land; surely God is with this people, we will go with them also."—G. Campbell Morgan, in Malachi's Message.

Malachi's Prophecy

Throughout this six months' course we have seen how the writers of the Old Testament were preparing the way for the teaching of Jesus the Christ. They plowed the ground that there might be soil ready for the great Sower. We have seen, too, how they prepared the world to expect his coming. Just as a friend may tell us about some one whom we do not know and show us his picture till we are prepared to recognize him when at last we meet him, so the prophets had spoken about the Messiah and had given glimpses of him till Andrew could well say to Peter, "We have found the Messiah."

"Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the

covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh, saith Jehovah of hosts." Thus our lesson begins. And a part of the last sentence of the Book of Malachi reads: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come." To those Jews who after the return from exile were in danger of drifting away from God, Malachi gave the promise of the coming day and connected it with the name of their great prophet Elijah. That it was a literal coming of Elijah which the prophet meant, is denied by the words of Jesus himself when he says of John the Baptist, "This is Elijah, that is to come." Just what the words of the prophecy of the coming day of the Lord meant to Malachi we may not know, but to us they mean a prophecy of the coming of Jesus the Christ.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The religious future of the Jews. See The Christian Century, Feb. 3, 1921.
2. The Messianic Prophecies. See page XLV of the One Volume Commentary.

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

OUR PART IN BRINGING IN A BETTER DAY

Beginning the Lesson

What did Malachi think it necessary for the people to do in order to bring in a better day? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Return unto Me, and I Will Return unto You

Some children have a habit of straying and getting themselves lost. I have heard that, whenever a large number of boys and girls go out for a day's holiday together, one or two are sure to be missing when the time comes for going home. How do they manage to get lost? Perhaps they see a pretty flower or a butterfly, and in order to get it, they begin by going just a little way in another direction than that taken by the rest. Then they go a little farther in the wrong way, and perhaps without knowing it take a wrong turning and so lose themselves by degrees.

It is most unpleasant, is it not, to find yourself lost? You feel quite alone and deserted, and it seems as if you can never get back home or find your friends again. But after a time, if you are sensible, you begin to think. You feel that you cannot have gone so very far after all. You wait till you meet some one, and you tell him where you live, and he will probably be kind enough to offer to see you home. But before you have gone very far on your homeward way, what is most likely to happen? You will see some one looking for you; your father or mother, or your elder brother or sister. They had not forgotten you, but they were looking for you all the time, and they are as glad to find you as you are to be found by them.

Now God is always looking for us, because we are always getting a little bit lost. He says: Do not go on getting farther and farther off; come back to me and I will come back to you. God is so anxious for us to go back to him, that he meets us more than half way.

There is a beautiful story told by our wise men, which runs something to this effect:—When God was about to create man, he took into his counsel the angels that stood about his throne. "Create him not," said the Angel of Justice, "for if thou dost, he will commit all kinds of wickedness against his fellow men; he will be hard, and cruel, and dishonest, and unrighteous." "Create him not," said the Angel of Truth, "for he will be false and deceitful to his brother man, and even to thee." "Create him not," said the Angel of Holiness; "he will follow that which is impure in thy sight and dishonor thee to thy face." Then stepped forward the Angel of Mercy, God's best beloved; and Mercy said, "Create him, O our Heavenly Father, for when he sins and turns from the path of right and truth and holiness, I will take him tenderly by the hand, and speak loving words to him, and lead him back to thee."

And God created man.

Ever since then, what the angels foresaw has come to pass. Never has there been a sinless man. "There is no man upon earth so righteous that he doeth only good and sinneth not." Some have sinned grievously indeed against the God who loves truth, and righteousness, and kindness, and humbleness, and holiness. And all of us must feel that, though God has given us the power to choose between good and evil we have often chosen the evil and rejected the good. And yet, whatever be the evil we have done and the good we have left undone, God's mercy

is ready to take us by the hand and help us to be more true to ourselves and to him. It is Mercy that pleads for that forgiveness which we all need.

This great, wide road of mercy is always open to you. That is God's highway, the way to him. Be just, be truthful, be holy, and you have started right; you are getting nearer to the great road back to your Father. He will help you to maintain your effort, he will hold out his hand to guide and support you.—Condensed from Sermons to Children, by Simeon Singer.

And I Will Pour You out a Blessing

"I have always been told that the heavenly Father takes care of his children, but it does not look like it," said George Mansfield to his friend Lyman Burton. "I have seen too many cases where the wicked prospered and the righteous were poor, where the evil were happy and the good wretched. It does not look as if religion helps very much in this life, after all.

"Of course I know the arguments," he hurried on, "about our not knowing what really is prosperity, and that health and money and comfort are not what they seem. But that kind of argument does not satisfy me. Take the case of old man Monroe, who lives down the creek here. If there was ever a good man, Monroe is one. He has always wanted to have money enough to educate his children, but he never has. He has prayed every day for years that Charlie might get well, but he has not; he gets worse all the time. Last year the lightning killed one of his horses—he had only two. This spring the wind blew down his barn, and his cow was drowned in a freshet. I suppose they have enough to eat and wear, but that is all. How do you account for a case like that?"

"There was a time," said Burton, gravely, "when they did not have enough to eat and wear. They were hungry and cold most of the time for ten winters—the neighbors had to give them food. That was in the days before Monroe became a Christian. He was a bad man then, and could not hold a job, and wasted what little he did make. It seems very good to them to have a dry roof, three rooms, and plenty of good food out here where the air is clean and the world at peace. I have heard them thank God for it many times. Have you talked with him since the lightning killed his horse and the wind blew down the barn?"

"Yes," answered George. "Did he complain?" "No." "Was he out of heart?" "No." "Did he speak bitterly of his fellow-men? Of luck? Of Providence?" "No." "Then you have your answer." Burton smiled thoughtfully. "I don't quite understand," said the young man.

"You see, George," Burton explained, gently, "you are looking in the wrong place. The spirit works inside instead of outside. When a man is born again, it is his spirit that is changed, and not the world outside. He has the same body and brain. It may be an inefficient body and an incapable brain; it may be a body cursed by heredity and weakened by habit, a brain undisciplined, untrained. The spirit will help him make the best of that body and brain, but it will not make them over for him. He will still be subject to disease and pain and failure as before. The world outside is not changed; there will still be storms and pestilence and famine. But his attitude toward it is changed. Instead of making his body and the world over so these difficulties may be removed, the spirit makes the real man—the inside man—over, so he can face them and conquer them by getting good out of them. When pain and misfortune come, they bring, instead of bitterness and despondency, sweetness of spirit and renewed faith.

"And to know this, that the spirit has been quickened into life, that evil cannot quench nor disaster embitter, is to possess 'that peace which passeth understanding.'"—The Youth's Companion.

One Girl's Part in Bringing in a Better World

It is not only the wealthy who can help. I know of one poor girl who has worked as a stenographer for years in a big city. She offered to go to the foreign field and was rejected on account of her health. Since then she has been saving and sending her money, supporting native workers at $30 each a year. There is a community in North India where there are more than a thousand souls that have been brought to Christ solely through native workers supported by this one frail girl. A thousand who have passed from darkness into his marvelous light, because one girl cared. How many are in the light because of what you have done?—Sherwood Eddy.

REVIEW: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION

GOLDEN TEXT: The lovingkindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, And his righteousness unto children's children. Psalm 103.17

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN THE EXILE AND THE RESTORATION

Lesson I. Before the destruction of Jerusalem the prophet Ezekiel went into exile with the first deportation, and five years afterwards he was called to the prophetic office. It was a severe arraignment of the people of Israel that he was told to make in the name of the Lord. Ezekiel lived up to his responsibility. Do we live up to ours? It is one thing to have convictions, but quite another thing to have the courage of convictions. A responsibility calls for a response. Not to respond to the responsibility that rightfully belongs to us is cowardly and base.

Lesson II. Ezekiel had been made a watchman unto the house of Israel, and if he had failed to deliver his God-given message, then would he have been "blood guilty," the blood of the wicked who died in their iniquity would have been required at his hand.

If you are sure that you can foresee what will happen if certain practices continue, and if you repress the impulse to warn, what may be your reason? If, then, evil things happen, what is your responsibility? What about people who say, "Just as I expected"; are they better or worse than those who say, "I told you so"?

Lesson III. In his lines entitled General William Booth Enters Into Heaven, Vachel Lindsay pictures the lowest and the lost re-created and transfigured.

Similarly, Ezekiel's vision pictured the briny waters of the Dead Sea so changed by the life-giving stream from the temple that they teemed with fish. What is the lesson of the vision?

Lesson IV. Does everyone who feels like prophesying really have a message from God to deliver? What is a false prophet? Do you think he knows that he is false? What about the older people who prophesy disaster because ways are changing? Are they true prophets? How do you know?

Does any one who prophesies today preface his prophecy with "Thus saith the Lord"? Might he? Why? Why not?

Lesson V. What is our saying about experience being a dear school? Whose experience is here meant? Does one often profit by the experience of others? What king of Babylon failed to profit by the experience of his predecessor?

Lesson VI. Back in the early days of Hebrew history we read that Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, and that was the beginning of his downfall. He faced the wrong way. The windows of Daniel's chamber were open toward Jerusalem. He faced the right way. In these two notes of direction we find a characterization of these two men. The trend of Daniel's life was toward Jerusalem and God.

When the time of testing came to Daniel and merely by avoiding his customary practice of prayer he might have escaped the sentence of death, he practically said: I steadfastly believe that my God is able to deliver me, but if not—be it known unto thee, O king, that I will not fail in my allegiance to him.

Lesson VII. The captivity was God's training school, where the exiles were given an opportunity to lament their rebelliousness and recognize their dependence upon him. Jeremiah had prophesied that after seventy years were accomplished God would visit and perform his good word toward them, in causing them to return to their home. The first opportunity for return from exile came in the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia. Jehovah stirred up the spirit of his king to make a proclamation permitting any who wished to go back and build the house of Jehovah.

Does God stir up the hearts of men today to do his will? Does he make his agents men who are not knowingly working his will? Cite instances.

Lesson VIII. The chief desire of the returning exiles was to rebuild the temple and reëstablish their ancient worship. It was a great day when the founda-

tion of the temple was laid, vocal and instrumental music formed part of the ceremony, and joy reigned supreme. But while there was joy in all hearts, conflicting emotions filled the hearts of the old men who had known the glorious temple of Solomon. They were weeping as well as rejoicing. Life has many such scenes, when the bitter mingles with the sweet. One of Tennyson's odes refers to a wedding as "the white funeral of the single life." The foundation laying of that second temple in the midst of ruin and desolation was to the old men a "white funeral" of all the glories of the past.

Lesson IX. Should missionaries, strong in their reliance upon God, refuse the help of their governments in times of peril? Should men and women trust in God's power to heal, and not seek the physician's aid in sickness? "Trust in God and keep your powder dry": have Cromwell's words an abiding force? How did Ezra put God's care to a test? How do you justify him?

Lesson X. Nehemiah came to Jerusalem and at once began the work of rebuilding the walls. And he carried the work through to completion, despite much opposition and intrigue. What were the difficulties he had to meet, and how did he win out?

Lesson XI. What great assembly was held after Jerusalem was fortified, and for what purpose? How was the great Bible reading conducted? In our church schools is the Bible sufficiently explained? Is it in our church services? Why should one study the Bible?

Lesson XII. Is Cinderella a parable? What does it teach? Cite modern novels which teach the same lesson. Is a novelist doing the best work who always has the self-sacrificing heroine rewarded by the rich hero? What is a wiser dénouement? If you wrote the scenarios for the motion pictures how would you reward virtue? How does the Old Testament constantly say virtue shall be rewarded? What did Malachi say? What did Christ say?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

SOME GREAT MEN OF HIS PERIOD

Lesson I. Ezekiel's name means "God is strong." His father, Buzi, was a priest. When he was called to be a prophet he was in Babylon. Why was he there? One day by the banks of the Chebar he had a great vision which was followed by his call to be a prophet. To what sort of people was he to prophesy? What was his duty in regard to them? He was happily married, but when his wife died he was forbidden to mourn or weep. Why?

Lesson II. In the Arizona desert is a well fifty-five miles from any other water. For years travelers crossing the desert knew of its existence and sought to find it. Many failed because there was nothing on that featureless plain to tell them where it is. All around are scattered the bones of men whose lives might have been saved could they have reached that well. Finally the land with the well passed into the hands of a man who appreciated his responsibility in the matter. He planted a tall cottonwood pole and hung a lantern from it, which he has always kept burning. Were the former owners in any way responsible for the deaths of those men? How does this incident apply to our second lesson?

Lesson III. An English scholar said of Phillips Brooks, the great Boston preacher and bishop:

"This man is just like a great water main attached to an everlasting reservoir of God's truth and grace and love, and streams of life, by a heavenly gravitation, pour through him to refresh my weary soul." The prophet Ezekiel believed that the most barren life could be redeemed by the River of God. What was his account of that river?

Lesson IV. It was in the reign of Jehoiakim that Daniel was taken to Babylon. The Book of Daniel has several very interesting stories about him. In the court of Nebuchadnezzar he and three other youths were given an easy, luxurious life, but they rebelled: why? With what result? How did the stand that Daniel then took test his character? Then came the time when Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which greatly troubled him. What did he require of his wise men in the matter? What did they answer? What did Daniel say was the dream? What did he say was the interpretation? Did it require courage on Daniel's part to tell it to the king?

Lesson V. Belshazzar, the grandson of King Nebuchadnezzar, with his father ruled Babylon. Outside the city, Cyrus, King of Persia, was encamped with a great army. For weeks the army had been there, but Belshazzar felt secure within the city walls. He gave a great feast one night, and used the sacred golden dishes and goblets taken from the temple in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Then suddenly in the midst of the noisy revelling a strange thing happened. What was it? The trembling king called upon his cleverest men to interpret those written words, but they could not. The queen suggested that Daniel be sent for. When Daniel came, what did he tell the king? How did that banquet end? What became of Daniel?

Lesson VI. A young man was taking photographs of bits of scenery in the Maine woods. He came upon a cavern between some rocks, and wondering what sort of picture he could get of the cave, he steadied his camera upon his knee, and took a "time exposure" of the semi-darkness within. Then he slowly departed. Several weeks later, on developing his picture, he was amazed and startled to see in the picture a huge Canadian lynx, his back arched and his fur bristling, standing within springing distance of the spot where he himself had stood without thought of possible danger. Could he not have thankfully repeated a verse from our sixth lesson—My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me? What story does this verse recall?

Lesson VII. Who was Cyrus? What decree did he make? Why did he make it? Who accepted the privilege? Who helped them? This was the first return from exile. Why had the Israelites become exiles? What had they learned in captivity? Why was it best for some of them to return to Judah?

Lesson VIII. At the Convention held in 1787 to frame our Constitution, Benjamin Franklin said: "The longer I live the more convincing proof I see that God governs in the affairs of man. And, if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured in the Sacred Writings that 'except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it.' I firmly believe this, and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall proceed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel."

These words of Franklin spoken when the foundations of our great nation were being laid recall the story of the laying of the foundation of the sacred temple. What was the ceremony?

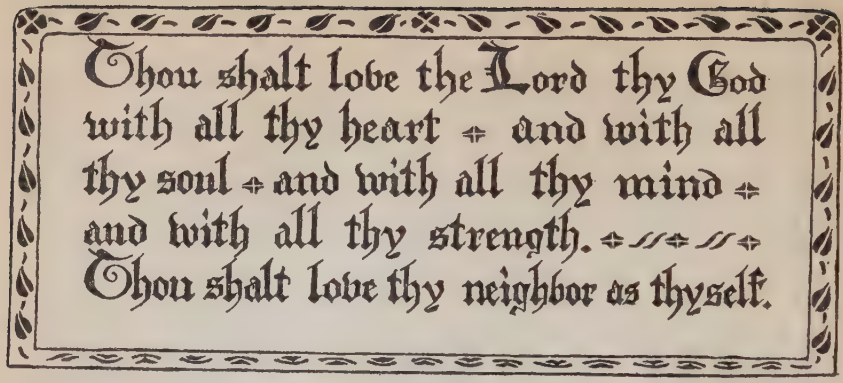
Lesson IX. The first glow of the return from exile passed, the poetry had become sober prose, and the long, hard work of rebuilding and reëstablishing the former worship and manner of living required the utmost patience and perseverance. It required, too, strong leaders at the helm. Then came Ezra, the man of affairs, valiant and capable, with reinforcements of men and measures. Tell the story.

Lesson X. "We did that well, didn't we, sir?" observed an organ-blower as he wiped his perspiring brow at the close of a performance in the days before electric power superseded muscle. "We!" exclaimed the organist, much affronted. "You are only the blower: I produce the music!" The next time the organist was to play, not a note came from the keyboard. Looking round the organ he found the smiling blower who greeted him in a loud whisper with: "Say, shall it be we?"

It was "we" in the days when Nehemiah labored with his compatriots in building the walls about Jerusalem. Who were the helpers? To whom was the credit for the work due? How did Nehemiah show himself a great leader?

Lesson XI. A year before his death, Lincoln said to a friend: "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Try to comprehend as much as possible of this book with your mind, and accept the rest with faith, and you will live and die a better man." This is what the people in Judah did after their city was made secure by its walls. Who was their leader in this Bible study?

Lesson XII. Beautifully has Dr. Maclaren said that as surely as every leaf that grows is mainly water which the plant has received from the clouds, and carbon which it has obtained from the atmosphere, so surely will all our good be mainly drawn from heaven and heaven's gifts. What do we not owe the Great Giver! What does Malachi say that we especially owe him? Of what did he accuse the people of Judah? How do we sometimes rob God?


Thou shalt love the Lord thy God
with all thy heart and with all
thy soul and with all thy mind
and with all thy strength.
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

FOURTH QUARTER

SOME SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE

Aim: To guide the pupil into an understanding of Bible teaching on some social relationships with a view to the establishing of right habits and attitudes in dealing with others.

Lesson I—October 6

RECOGNIZING OUR DEBTS TO OTHERS

GOLDEN TEXT: Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Philippians 2.4

LESSON Nehemiah 4.15-23; Mark 12.28-34; Romans 15.1-7; Philippians 2.1-8; Colossians 3.12; 4.1; James 2.14-17
DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 40.5-10

MARK 12.28 And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all? 29 Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: 30 and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. 31 The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. 32 And the scribe said unto him, Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said that he is one; and there is none other but he: 33 and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

JAMES 2.14 What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, 16 and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. RECOGNIZING OUR DEBT TO OTHERS, Mark 12.28-34. A scribe who was standing by, and knew that Jesus had answered wisely the questions put to him (see The Historical Background), asked Jesus, "What Commandment is the first of all?" See Light from Oriental Life. Jesus replied by quoting Deuteronomy 6.4-5: "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"—that is, with all thy powers. "In these terms some interpreters have recognized the language of a primitive psychology, an attempt at a threefold or fourfold division of human nature, 'soul' referring to emotion, 'mind' to intellect, and 'strength' to will. But whatever may be thought of this suggestion,

it is manifest that the words are intended to claim for God the affection of human nature in all its extent and in all its intensity" (James Stalker).

"'How am I to learn to love God? I want to do my duty, but I do not feel as if I loved God.' Our Lord gives the answer: 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' Act for God; do and say the things that he wills; direct your thoughts and intentions Godward; and depend upon it, in the slow process of nature all that belongs to you—your intelligence, your affections, your feelings—will gradually follow along the line of your action. Act for God; you are already showing love to him, and you will learn to feel it" (Charles Gore).

"The second is this," continued Jesus and quoted Lev. 19.18: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "The chief service rendered by Jesus to this second commandment was to associate it so closely with the first. In the Old Testament the two Commandments lie far apart with no indication of any connection between them; but he brought the two together in such a manner as to suggest that they have an intimate relation to each other. In reality they are twin commandments; and so closely are they connected that they cannot exist, or, at all events they cannot have a healthy existence, apart" (James Stalker). In James 2.8, this second commandment is called "the royal law." We do not now speak of one another as *neighbors* unless we literally live near together, and the better word here would be *brothers,* in the sense that all are children of one Father. The words "as thyself" do not mean in the same degree, but after the same manner. "When it is said, Love thy neighbor as thyself, it is not meant thou shall love him first and do good to him in consequence of that love, but that thou shalt do good to thy neighbor, and this very beneficence will engender in thee that love of mankind which is the fulness and consummation of the inclination to do good" (Immanuel Kant). "There is none other commandment greater than these."

"As we have mastered nature, let us strive now to master the social relations of mankind that we may gain justice and a world of brothers. For what shall it profit our nation if it gain members and victories, and lose the sense of the living God and the joy of brotherhood?" (Walter Rauschenbusch).

With great conviction the scribe returned: "Of a truth, Teacher, thou hast well said": the Greek word καλως, translated *well,* means literally beautifully, and gives the idea of complete satisfaction with the reply. And then the scribe repeated Jesus' words: "He is one; and there is none other but he: and to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices."

Jesus saw that the scribe had answered discreetly, that is, understandingly. The scribe's wisdom is shown, not alone in accepting Jesus' answer, but in further admitting that moral obligations are more important than forms of worship—burnt offerings and sacrifices. And Jesus said unto him, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God." "If thou art not far off, enter; better otherwise to have been far off," is Bengel's comment. And no man after that dared ask him any question.

"The scribe's intellectual convictions needed to be led on from recognition of the spirituality of the Law to recognition of his own failures. His intellectual convictions needed to pass over into and influence his heart and life. How many of us have lying in our heads, like disused furniture in a lumber-room, what we suppose to be beliefs of ours, which need to be followed out to their necessary results! There are multitudes who have, or have had, convictions of which the only rational outcome is practical surrender to Jesus Christ by faith and love. To all such this text sounds a warning note, which has also hope in its tone. 'Not far from' is still 'outside'" (Alexander Maclaren).

II. FULFILLING OUR DEBT TO OTHERS, James 2.14-17. "What doth it profit, my brethren," James asks (the Greek means literally, what is the use), "if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? can that faith save him?" When Ruskin says, "What we think or what we know or what we believe is in the end of little consequence; the only thing of consequence is what we do," he is speaking of a mere doctrine, a barren belief that does not lead to action; and

so is James when he says, "What doth it profit if a man say he hath faith, but have not works?" Moreover, the "faith" referred to here, is, as the Expositor's Greek Testament explains, "faith as expressed in the *Shema* (Dt. 6.4 etc.): 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One'; this was the fundamental tenet of the Jewish faith, and that it is this to which reference is made, and not the Christian faith, is obvious from verse eleven, which contains the essence of the *Shema*."

"We are assured that an educated Hindu will pass an examination in hygiene, and then look on complacently while every imaginable sanitary law is violated within the walls of his own compound. He does not so realize his science as to appreciate its practical import; he is content with the abstruse knowledge, never proceeding to apply it. Does that faith save him? We know that his theoretic science gives him no immunity whatever; he falls a victim to the prevailing epidemic just as readily as do those who never heard of any science of health. Likewise the nominal saint masters the creed; sometimes in actual experience and conduct he violates every great spiritual and moral law. Does his faith save him? Does it save in the day of temptation, enabling the tempted one to put away the evil thing? And what fails to save us here and now is not likely to save us elsewhere and hereafter. What stops with fancy and dreams is of little count in any department of life, least of all in questions of character and destiny" (W. L. Watkinson).

If a brother or sister lack clothes and food, will it avail if you merely utter kind wishes and do nothing? James questions. Such a speaker might think he was sorry for those destitute ones, might wish their wants were supplied, but feeling and wishing that end with mere words are valueless. "The mouth is not sweetened by saying, 'Honey, honey' "—says the Arab proverb. "The distant fire one cannot warm at," is a Malagasy saying.

Even as words of charity without deeds are dead; so faith without works is dead in itself. Life is seen by action; true faith is seen by its works.

"It is true of men and watches—
You may tell them by their works."

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

One of the scribes, Mark 12.28. Long before the time of our Savior, the law, written and oral, had become the absolute norm of Jewish life. Every detail of life, civil as well as religious, was regulated in the minutest manner by the law. It was impossible for the ordinary Jew to be fully acquainted with the innumerable statutes referring, e.g., to Levitical purity or the keeping of the Sabbath, and to apply them to the fresh cases that emerged daily; and yet his standing before God depended upon his scrupulous observance of these statutes. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, that a special class of men should devote themselves expressly to the study of the law. These were the "scribes," "lawyers," or "doctors of law."—Hastings' Bible Dictionary.

What commandment is the first of all? Mark 12.28. According to the scribes there were three hundred and sixty-five prohibitions and two hundred and twenty-eight commandments in the Pentateuch, and which of these was the greatest was a common dispute. The first great commandment which Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy was repeated by the Jews in their morning and evening prayer, was inscribed in the phylacteries which the Pharisees wore on their foreheads, and was enclosed in the Mezzuzah, which was nailed to the doorposts.

But have not works, James 2.14. The belief in the efficacy of works among the Jews has always been very strong; the following quotations express the traditional teaching of Judaism on the subject:

"He that does a good work in this world, in the world to come his good work goes before him." "When Mar Ukba lay a-dying, he asked for his account; it amounted to seven thousand *Zuzim* (i.e., this was the sum-total of his almsgiving). Then he cried out: 'The way is far, and the provision is small' (i.e. he did not think that this sum would be sufficient to ensure his justification in the sight of God, and thus give him salvation); so he gave away half of his fortune, in order to make himself quite secure." "God placed the poor on earth in order to save rich men from hell."—Expositor's Greek Testament.

THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Background of Mark 12.28-34

It was Tuesday of the last week of Christ's life, the day on which his last public teaching was given. The Pharisees had asked their question about giving tribute to Cæsar, hoping that his answer would bring him into conflict with the Roman power; then the Sadducees, hoping to humiliate him before his enemies and the multitude, had asked their absurd question about marriage in the life hereafter. These questions failed to obtain any word from Jesus that could be used against him. Then it was that the scribe asked his question about the greatest commandment; an honest question, it would seem, with no ulterior motive.

The Background of James 2.14-17

There are three prominent men in the New Testament by the name of James: James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John, the apostle who was put to death by Herod; James, the son of Alphæus, another apostle called James the Less; and James, the brother of Jesus, who according to very early tradition was the bishop of the Christian church at Jerusalem. The Epistle of James is generally believed the work of James the brother of Jesus.

It is a very practical epistle. Written to those who conceived religion to be a matter of opinion rather than of character and conduct, who were hearers rather than doers of the word, it lays stress on right living, teaching that Christian morality is essential to salvation.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Note that James, in verse fourteen of our text, makes an affirmation by means of questions, questions which compel his readers to think, and then proceeds to enforce that affirmation by a concrete example. He must have been a good teacher.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

FULFILLING OUR OBLIGATION TO OTHERS

Beginning the Lesson

He who loves God loves his fellow men. The managers of a charitable home for sick children found that it was maintained almost wholly by contributions from church members. The committee having the work in charge, says The Youth's Companion, decided to make its next appeal to the non-church-going portion of the community. A prominent clubman was made the treasurer of the funds, the banks were made depositories, the newspapers supported the movement, the literary and social clubs indorsed it, and the churches also made their usual contributions. A large sum was raised, but when the lists of contributors were examined, it was found, greatly to the surprise of the committee, that ninety-eight per cent. of the money received from all sources had come from those who were known to be church attendants. "There was no rivalry about it, no attempt to make a good showing for the churches. The simple truth is that people who love God are those who truly love their fellow men."

What Jesus Taught about Fulfilling Our Obligations to Others

Jesus said that the whole duty of man is summed up in two commandments—that we love God, and that we love our brother also. And he spent the most of his time teaching the second of the two. Take the Sermon on the Mount: how little there is in it of theology, the science of God, and how much of sociology, the science of society; how entirely it is taken up with the divine task of making this life better, leaving the next life till we come to it! It is a sermon about conduct, about the art of living with others, and about the social virtues, about brotherly love. And then consider the parables and the miracles; see where Christ put the emphasis of his teaching. The purpose that he lived for was to make this planet a better place to live in. He came to save us from our sins—that is, to help us out of our vices, our uglinesses, and our tyrannies, and our meannesses, and all our unbrotherliness, and to make us pleasanter people to live with now. You know the list he gave of examination questions for admission into heaven—not one of them containing even a mention of theology: Have you fed the hungry? Have you visited the sick? Have you cared for the sinner? That shows what Christ considered to be the biggest and best part of Christianity. He meant that Christians should be known, not by their doctrines about theology, but by their ministrations

in society. He said that if heaven is ever going to begin for man, here is the place and now is the time. "Behold, how these Christians love one another!"—that is what Christ wanted everybody in the world to say.—George Hodges, in Christianity Between Sundays.

A Life Consecrated to Unselfish Aims

No life amounts to anything until it becomes absorbed in some aim which carries it out of and beyond itself. The man who is occupied in consuming three meals a day, in dressing his body, and in giving it its due quota of comfortable sleep, is superior to the oyster only in corporeal size; they are both biological specimens, only one is larger and more complicated than the other, and, because of his larger power, one of them can eat the other. Now, if this biological man is ever to rise above the biological level and be something more, he must discover a way of living which delivers him from the mere play of natural forces—the mere pursuit of materials for the animal life,—and this lays upon him an inner compulsion to devote himself to an ideal; that is, to an unselfish and spiritual cause, a cause for the promotion and advancement of interests other than his own. Nobody gets out of the biological order of life until in some degree he has learned to say, "For their sakes I consecrate myself."

There are, of course, many degrees and scales of this struggle for the life of others, this consecration to unselfish causes, this way of living for aims that are enlarging and spiritual. Many a person finds that his occupation not only supplies him with food and clothing, but also gives him opportunities for the consecrated life. The shoemaker who makes an absolutely honest shoe, not merely because he wants his wages, but still more because he wants the little unknown child that is to wear it to have a solid and durable shoe, who therefore pegs and stitches his own spirit of honesty into his piece of work—that man has risen above the biological scale and has found a way of living a life which has a touch of consecration upon it.

"Telephone girls" do not usually impress us as consecrated, but when, as happened a few years ago in a terrible crisis which threatened two towns with annihilation, two of these exchange girls stayed at their post and risked their own lives to warn the citizens to flee before the oncoming wall of water, we must feel that they had formed and cultivated a way of living which took them out of self and consecrated them to unselfish aims.—Condensed from The World Within, by Rufus M. Jones.

No One Can Be a Selfish Christian

Selfishness is a dark and degrading trait of human nature. Within certain limits it is the privilege and duty of each one to care for his own interests. Each man is charged with responsibility for his own health, his own support, his own education, his own salvation. But when one becomes so much absorbed in his own affairs as to ignore or neglect others altogether, he makes a grave mistake and fails in his mission. To live for self is to perish. Selfishness creeps into the home and destroys domestic happiness and peace. It enters the Church and rends the body of Christ. It finds its way into every department of the government of the nation, corrupts the counsels of its representatives, and paralyzes every arm of the public service.

This is an insidious principle. It is easy for us to see selfishness in our neighbors, but difficult to discover it in ourselves. The same symptoms which in others appear to be clear evidences of selfishness, seen in ourselves, appear to be evidences of justice and manliness. We need not only to fight against this lurking evil, but also to watch and pray against it continually.

The first step in a Christian life is self-denial. "If any man will be my disciple," says Jesus, "let him deny himself." Until this is done nothing is done. The best creed in the world cannot make a man a Christian so long as he continues to live for himself. All the good works in the world cannot make a man a Christian so long as self is on the throne of his heart. One may be a selfish church member, a selfish preacher, a selfish bishop, but no one can be a selfish Christian.

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Christ was a model of unselfishness. He did not choose the easy way. He did not walk in the path which promised luxury, promotion, and freedom from pain. He did not even use his own supernatural power for the gratification of his natural appetite in time of need. He refused to turn aside from the path of service for all the kingdoms of the world. He lived for others and died for others. He placed his shoulder and his heart under the burden of man's sin and sorrow, and bore it on through poverty, persecution,

reproach, and opposition until he finished his work on the cross. He pleased not himself.

Every true follower of Christ must follow him in this way. What a melancholy spectacle the great mass of self-seeking, place-hunting, man-pleasing, ease-loving professors of the faith of Christ must present to the eyes of angels and of God!—The Christian Advocate.

The Need of the "Otheristic Imagination"

No man can truly obey the Golden Rule of doing to others as he would have others do to himself until he exercises the otheristic imagination—placing himself, as it were, in their position. For example, let the producer try to imagine himself in the place of the consumer, and the consumer in the place of the producer: or let the buyer and seller exchange for the moment their respective places, the buyer standing behind the counter instead of before it, and the seller before the counter instead of behind it: I fancy that in this somewhat rare exercise of the otheristic imagination, the bargain will be tolerably ideal, approximating the even balance of the standard ethical scales. And so in society generally. Ah, what our poor world needs is not division of spoils, but reciprocity of life; not compassion, but co-passion; not pity, but sympathy.—George D. Boardman, in The Kingdom.

She Thought She Had No Obligations to Others

It was early evening on a midwinter Cuban steamer—the last hours of the dazzling day. A group of lively people sat upon the upper deck of the steamer, watching the sudden change of the fiery sky into shadows and silver stars. Among the group was a richly dressed young woman, to whom the sea and sky and the somber and suggestive change were of little interest.

She evidently belonged to a family that had become suddenly rich, and socially ambitious. She talked to a friend, who sat near her, in a loud voice that everybody on deck could hear; mentioned the names of well-known political and literary people whose receptions she said she had attended; described the costly style of living of families that made up her set, as she called them, and by this ill-bred garrulousness had unconsciously pictured herself as leading a superficial, frivolous and wholly selfish life.

"I could not live without society," she said to her companion. "My life is a round of pleasures and of social excitement. My nature requires it, and I intend to get the greatest enjoyment I can out of life."

"For yourself only?"

"Why, yes. Of course I live for myself and to get all the gratification I can."

"Do you?" said the lady, slowly and thoughtfully. "Then will you tell me what possible excuse you have for existence?"

"Excuse?"

A silence followed. The steamer whistle blew, and a hundred voices answered it from the night-covered hills not far away. The young woman did not speak again, but she will not soon forget the significance of that word—"excuse."

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The universal sin of selfishness. Not what has happened to myself today, but what has happened to others through me—that should be my thought.—Frederick D. Blake.

2. The worthlessness of words where deeds are needed.

3. Modern socialism.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. How could the King's dainties "defile" Daniel? 2. What effect has gluttony upon the mind and body? 3. What is the latest information in regard to the opium traffic? 4. The traffic in liquor in the United States? 5. In Canada? 6. In Europe?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

WHAT DO WE OWE TO OTHERS?

Beginning the Lesson

What is our topic? What is your answer to that question? What is the answer

of Jesus, as given in our text from Mark? What has James to say about what we owe others? Can you think of any sin which does not have back of it the sin of selfishness?

"Dear Jesus," said a little girl at bedtime prayer, "we saw a man today who had no overcoat, and he was very cold, and he seemed very hungry; but it's none of our business, is it, Jesus?" There are many grownups who act as if God would provide for the needy, and it is not their business to be God's distributing agents when they see the need. What does James say about such people?

The Test of Our Religion

The final test of the truth and value of our religion is whether or not it drives us to activity in service for others. The Bible is filled with statements which show this to be the case. Christ says, "Ye are the salt of the earth." What value is salt if it remains to itself? Did you ever hear of a hungry man asking for pure salt? No, salt becomes of value only as it mingles with the rest of the food and seasons it. Exactly so, Christians living to themselves are of little value, but mingling with men and influencing them Christians become of as great value to the world as salt is to food. Christ says, "Ye are the light of the world." But what value is light if it is shut up to itself? In itself it is valueless. It becomes of value only as it lights the object about it. Christ compared us to leaven. Is leaven of any value except as it works in the lump in which it is placed? It is valueless as a food. If you become Christians and church members only to fold your hands and do nothing more you will miss the main teaching of the Christian religion as I have found it in the Bible.—Chang Po Ling.

What Does Christ Expect of Young People Today?

A group of boys and girls in a church school of a suburb of New York was discussing this question. (Their leader, T. H. P. Sailer, has written an interesting account of their various discussions for the Journal of the Religious Education Association.) In regard to examples such as James mentions in our text, Mary said she did not like to read accounts of people in great poverty and distress. There was nothing you could do about such things and it only made you uncomfortable to know about them. She supposed that it ought to be somebody's business to keep track of such cases and try to help them, but there was no use for other people to spoil their appetites thinking about all the misery in the world. What do you think about this?

Tom said he thought it would be better just to get used to such things. As long as things were as they were there was bound to be a great deal of trouble, and you could hardly help knowing more or less about it. If you just took for granted that things must be so, you would after a while quit minding about it, and your appetite would be all right. How does Tom's argument strike you?

Is there any use in knowing about trouble in the world if you can do nothing to help? Ought it to spoil one's appetite to know about the misery in the world?

The group in that church school settled the subject in this way. It was agreed that we ought to know about trouble in the world in order to cultivate an interest in such matters at a time when our interests are being formed, to learn to give to the things that represent the largest needs, to clinch habits of extravagance and waste, to feel greater responsibility for our privileges.

Others

One Christmas time General Booth, then head of the Salvation Army, wished to send a message of inspiration to every leader in his great army, extending from Alaska to Australia. To cable many words would have cost a great amount of money: what could he say in one word that would express a great deal? After long thought, he found the right word: it was "Others."

Forward, in a talk about what we owe others, has this to say:

The home Christian whose thought is for others—what resistless influence lies there! Any Christian can begin, within the four walls of home, to consider and love and influence others. A family quarrel between Christians ought to be impossible. Christian love is the greatest force in the world, and its starting place is at the family hearth and table. In every household of believers the three meals daily should be times of love and cheer, instead of, as in many cases, times when a dull silence is preserved or continual bickering goes on. Where a father or mother or sister or brother has the keyword, "others" and lives by it, the home teaching of Christianity is so powerful that no one within the four walls can escape or forget it.

"Others"—when Christianity takes up the tasks of life outside of home, what this keyword comes to mean! "Charity (that is, love) begins at home," but love has power to solve all the vexed problems of church and state. The disciple with the thought of others makes the valuable citizen, as well as the good neighbor. "Is this the house where the lady lives who belongs to the poor?" asked a little girl, in search of help, at the door of a woman of large influence in the community—and the question revealed why the influence was so great. Those who live for others, who belong to the service of others, are those who, in Christ's wonderful phrase, lose their lives and find them.

"Others." There is no place in the world where this keyword does not fit in. There is no problem of daily living that it does not help to solve. There is no spiritual tangle that it does not aid in straightening out. There are young men and women today suffering from moods of doubt who need most to turn away their eyes from themselves and "do something for somebody, quick!" Self is the great obstacle in the Christian life. The less one thinks of one's self, the more one thinks about others, the surer is spiritual growth. The Lord's Prayer begins with "Our" not "My." In thought for others, in service to others, in unselfish love and cheerful self-denial, lies the secret of the saints. Any Christian can write the keyword on his heart. Any Christian can go forward in its power.

Not Looking Each of You to His Own Things, but Each of You Also to the Things of Others

One hot July evening (as a story goes) the Hadleys were gathered about the dinner table, when Hilda spoke, according to a story I have read: "Mother, Celia Lamont just won't take 'no' for an answer—about my going to the mountains with them. I don't see why I can't if I'm willing to go without new clothes. Doctor Stubbs says that every one ought to take a vacation." Aunt Nancy looked up quickly, as if she were going to speak, but at the moment she said nothing. After supper, however, she stopped Hilda out on the piazza. "Doesn't it make a difference," she asked, "whether you take your own vacation, or some other person's?"

"What do you mean?" Hilda asked, uncomfortably; she stood in awe of Aunt Nancy. "Well, I suppose there's just about so much money for vacation in this family—there generally is. Did Ruth go away last year?" "She didn't want to," Hilda replied, flushing. "Or the boys?" "Boys don't care." "Oh, don't they! Did you ever notice Kent's face when he handles his fishing-rod? Or Rob's when you speak of the mountains? And your mother—when did she go away last?" "Why, mother doesn't ever go anywhere!" There was sheer amazement in Hilda's voice now. She even forgot her annoyance at Aunt Nancy in the absurdity of the thought. Aunt Nancy's comment was dry. "She looks it," she said, as she turned away.

For a moment Hilda stood stunned; then she ran up stairs in a blaze of anger and locked her door behind her. But she could not lock out Aunt Nancy's words—"Whose vacation do you want? She looks it—she looks it." Whose vacation did she want? Rob's? Kent's? Ruth's? Her mother's?

Sentence Sermons

Words are good when works follow.—A German Saying.

To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.—James.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.—Jesus.

Every kindness done to others is a step nearer to the life of Christ.—Dean Stanley.

In so far as we are living for ourselves we are not Christians.—J. R. Miller.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. In whose reign and by whom was Daniel taken to Babylon? (Dan. 1.1.) 2. What does "purposed in his heart" mean? 3. Did Daniel's water and plain fare have anything to do with his clear thinking? 4. What do you know about the training table for athletes? 5. In the Pickwick Papers the eldest Mr. Weller calls his son's attention to the excessive amounts of tea indulged in by his wife's temperance groups; why was self-control there advisable? Why was it not so essential as it would have been had their indulgence been in alcoholic drink instead of tea? 6. Why do we have a Prohibition Law?

KEEPING FIT FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS
(TEMPERANCE LESSON)

GOLDEN TEXT: Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price; glorify God therefore, in your body. I Corinthians 6.19, 20

LESSON Daniel 1.8-20; 1 Corinthians 9.19-27; 1 Timothy 4.7-12; 2 Timothy 2.1-5
DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 66.1-4, 16-20

DANIEL 1.8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the youths that are of your own age? so would ye endanger my head with the king. 11 Then said Daniel to the steward whom the prince of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the king's dainties; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

14 So he hearkened unto them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths that did eat of the king's dainties. 16 So the steward took away their dainties, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse.

17 Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18 And at the end of the days which the king had appointed for bringing them in, the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Explanations and Comments upon the text; Light from Oriental Life and the Historical and Geographical Background for our lesson text were all given in our lesson for July 28. By questions recall the story as the basis of your topical teaching.

Daniel is thought to have been only fourteen years of age when he made his firm resolve. His self-mastery in youth was the keynote of his masterful life. Youth is the time to purpose in one's heart to be true to principle and loyal to God.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS
TEMPERANCE ESSENTIAL TO THE HIGHEST USEFULNESS

Beginning the Lesson

The young men who gave up wine and dainties for water and plain fare were strong both physically and intellectually. Their fine appearance was noteworthy; and best of all, not only were they fairer and healthier for their abstinence, but their brains were clearer and they had more knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.

The result of the experiment was no surprise to them. A newspaper contains an account of an experiment made in the village of Hickington, England, which was a surprise to the drinkers themselves. Some of the villagers were so goaded by the taunts of the keepers of the beer-houses because of their Liberal political opinions, that they formed a league among themselves to boycott the beer-houses for twelve months. At the end of a week the keepers of seven out of the eight beer-houses found that they would have to give up their business, and the advantages to pocket and health of the abstainers were evidently so great that many others of their fellow-villagers joined them. Almost the whole village are now members of "The Workmen's Temperance League," as it is now called, for its political character has been lost sight of in its temperance interest.

All the world knows that food and drink wonderfully affect body and mind, that

intoxicating drinks and sumptuous diet are harmful to both. Insurance companies have proved this; their tables show that intemperate habits shorten life. Physicians not only see the direct ravages made on the body by excessive eating and drinking, but they know that it is more difficult to cure a moderate drinker of disease not traceable to drink than it is a total abstanier. Dr. Woods Hutchinson, in "A Physician's Straight Talk on Alcohol" says: "An amount of alcohol which one man might seem to consume with impunity may be seriously injurious to another; and a daily consumption which will produce not the slightest symptom of intoxication, or even of discomfort, or headache, may be slowly and fatally damaging the cells of

Ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's Palace

your liver or kidneys. The conviction is growing among pathologists that the tissues of many moderate drinkers are damaged in this slow, insidious way, without their being in the slightest degree conscious of any injury or even discomfort. You never can quite tell what alcohol has done to you until the post-mortem—and then the question won't interest you much."

It is not with the body only that drink works havoc. It weakens the mental powers, dulls the conscience, and hardens the spiritual life. Excess in eating produces dulness of brain and sluggishness of will power. To quote again from Dr. Hutchinson: "In spite of the many praises of wine which have been sung by poet and chanted by musicians, and painted by artists, no first-class creation of the imagination, or even good second-class in poetry, music or painting, was ever either conceived or executed under the influence of alcohol." Similarly, any practiced after-dinner speaker will tell you that while it is much easier to make a speech which your audience will think brilliant, witty and graceful if they have imbibed a moderate amount of champagne, it is a very different matter if you have taken half that amount of champagne yourself. Any feeble little conceit will sound exceedingly witty and funny when you are "exhilarated," but the kind of things that you say when you are drunk—! "When the wine's in, the wit's out," describes them exactly.

"Drinking makes thinking impossible," says the Scottish reformer. "Some day thinking will make drinking impossible."

Temperance Essential to the Highest Usefulness

Nothing is more absolutely proved than that total abstinence from alcohol and simplicity of diet are the best methods of obtaining health of body and strength of brain. The pages of history are filled with the records of noble and useful lives,

richly gifted, which have been rendered powerless by indulgence in liquor and food, whilst lives with comparatively few gifts have become mighty in their benefit to the race, because the soul held the appetites of the body under perfect control. Happy would it be for the world if all the young people who study Daniel's example would follow it, and resolve that "I like" shall always wait upon "I choose." Resolve to live without the king's dainties, and determine to eat and drink in such quantities and of such quality as will help to make the best output of life.—F. B. Meyer.

Alcohol and Dependability

Dr. Thomas Nixon Carver, Professor of Economics in Harvard University, speaking before the American Economic Association, said:

"In this highly specialized interlocking civilization of ours, one of the most valuable human qualities is dependability. Anything whatsoever that will generally promote sobriety also tends to promote dependability. Under our interlocking civilization nearly every worthwhile position is a position of responsibility. The undependable person can only be used in the very lowest and least remunerative occupations.

"This leads to the conclusion not only that the general advance of civilization requires the suppression of drunkenness, but the advance in wages likewise requires it.

"In short, a prohibitory law, where it is enforced, not only causes the money received by workers to be spent more intelligently, it actually tends to give them more money to spend by relieving the congestion in the low-wage occupations and encouraging that occupational redistribution of labor which is an effective cause of the equalizing tendencies visible in this country at the present time."

Alcohol and Work

Experiments show that alcohol does not increase the capacity to do muscular work, but distinctly decreases it. Doubtless this seems at variance with many a man's observation of himself; but the explanation is found in the fact that alcohol blurs the judgment. As Voit remarks, it gives, not strength, but, at most, the feeling of strength. A man may think he is working faster and better under the influence of alcohol than he would otherwise do; but rigidly conducted experiments do not confirm this opinion. It is well understood by all who control large bodies of men engaged in physical labor, that alcohol and effective work are incompatible.

The celebrated physicist Von Helmholtz, one of the foremost thinkers of the nineteenth century, declared that the very smallest quantity of alcohol served effectively, while its influence lasted, to banish from his mind all possibility of creative effort, all capacity to solve an abstruse problem. The results of experiments in the field of physiological psychology convince one that the same thing is true in some measure of every other mind capable of creative thinking.—H. S. Williams.

Why Do Men Stupefy Themselves

It seems to people that a slight stupefaction, a little darkening of the judgment, cannot have any important influence. But to think so is as if one supposed that it may harm a watch to be struck against a stone, but that a little dirt introduced into it cannot do it any harm.

Remember, however, that the chief work actuating man's whole life is not work done by his hands, feet, or back, but by his consciousness. For a man to do anything with feet or hands, a certain alteration has first to take place in his consciousness. And this alteration defines all the subsequent movements of the man. Yet these alterations are always minute and almost imperceptible.—Tolstoy.

Social Redemption versus Personal Liberty

There is one pearl which most people value, and which I supposed is treasured by every one of my readers—the pearl of personal liberty. Liberty is a precious possession; we regard it as of great and significant value. But suppose I discover another pearl of greater value, which cannot be gained without the sacrifice of personal liberty. What is my duty in the sight of God? The duty of sacrifice; to sell what I have and buy it; to let go the one pearl for the sake of getting the other. But what can be more precious than personal liberty? Social redemption. Personal liberty is good, social redemption is better. By social redemption I mean a saved commonwealth; the integrity and purity and sound moral health of social life. The moral welfare of a city is of greater value than the personal liberty of any individual citizen.—J. H. Jowett, in The Folly of Unbelief.

Before and after Prohibition

Admiral Mark Kerr, of the British Royal Navy, after a recent visit to Canada

and the United States wrote an article for papers upon the Drink Habit in America. Here are excerpts from what he discovered:

"The first place where its benefits were brought home to me was in Newfoundland, where I had been twice before the War, and had seen the colony in its drinking days. St. John's, the capital, was not a pleasant place when the fishing or sealing fleets returned from their voyages. Sobriety was nonexistent, or hid itself, and the results were poignantly seen in the homes of the poor people, both outside and inside the town. There was no comfort, no luxury, and the children looked bloodless, ill-clothed and underfed.

"The next time I visited Newfoundland, in 1919, it was under the ban of Prohibition, which had been instituted during the War, and had been in force over four years. Never have I seen such a difference in a place in so short space of time. Drunkenness was unknown, the houses were comfortable, many having pianos and gramophones; the children were well-fed and happy, and many people were keeping small cars, where previous to Prohibition all was wretchedness and poverty.

"The results of prohibition in the United States are very wonderful, and at the same time most natural. Instead of burning the candle at both ends, they save it, for, in addition to the wife getting the wages which formerly went down the sink of iniquity, the average work of the men in the United States of America has increased ten per cent. since Prohibition came in. The saving is enormous, for the drink bill of the United States was formerly estimated at five thousand million sterling per annum; and as drink-making and consuming is unproductive labor, which they have now done away with, some of the money must be added to the ten per cent. increase of work of every able-bodied man in the U. S. of America, to get the total gain which is resulting economically from Prohibition. But this does not exhaust the good. One of the richest men in Kansas told me that they had not had a man in the State prison for seventeen years, and the office of Sheriff had been abolished. This gentleman had also been Governor of Ellis Island, New York, for fifteen years, and it was his duty to inspect and go into the medical history of all immigrants. During this period he had investigated the parentage of all people of weak intellect who tried to gain admission to the United States of America, and he said that practically every case was shown to be the result of alcoholism in both parents."

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Simple diet and physical and mental vigor.
2. Alcohol and Efficiency.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What did Jesus mean by his words in Jn. 5.17? 2. What reason for work did Paul give in our selection from Ephesians? 3. What is said about work in Ecclesiastes 3.22? 4. Why is useful work a Christian duty? 5. Why should the moneyed man work? 6. Do you know the joy of work? 7. In what ways are many people in our land seeking to live without work?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

SELF-CONTROL FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Beginning the Lesson

On the door or window of a restaurant in Jewish quarters may be seen the word *Kosher* in English or Hebrew letters. It means that all the food there served has been prepared according to the strict requirements of the ancient law. Let us turn to Deuteronomy 12.23, 24 and Leviticus 11.4-20 to see what was forbidden the ancient Israelites.

When a Hebrew youth named Daniel was taken a captive to Babylon he was one of several young men selected for a high position in King Nebuchadnezzar's court. Three years of training were before him, during which he was to be fed with the king's dainties and wine, food which was forbidden by the laws which had hedged his childhood. He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself therewith. Only the young man's "No," stood between him and the power of the great monarch, yet the "No" won the day. How?

Defiled by Dainties

Ask any physician whether sickness and death does not often come from over-eating, or unwise eating. Gluttony does not harm others besides the one who indulges therein,

as does intemperance, but its harmfulness is seldom fully appreciated. Is there some truth in the argument put forth by a correspondent of The London Times that over-eating of sweets by children has an effect on character, that the habit fosters that attitude of mind which leads the individual habitually to satisfy a craving as soon as it is felt, and develops into the habit of drinking and of looking forward to some fresh opportunity of self-indulgence as the principal object in life?

Cameo of Nebuchadnezzar

"Eats Himself to Death," was the caption in a New York daily of the account of a farmer's death. He went to a hotel and ordered a big meal. The food tasted so good that he ordered another meal. He repeated his order twice more. Suddenly he fell over dead. An examination showed that the stomach and other organs had been ruptured by the strain put upon them. Death does not often come so suddenly to the glutton, but gluttony always bring dire evils in its train.

In Tennyson's Vision of Sin, the soul is compared to a finely organized steed:

> That would have flown,
> But that his heavy rider kept him down.

"The flesh can be a heavy rider restraining the soul from its flights. To live coarsely in the body is to vulgarize the soul. A man's eating has direct relation to the quality of his spiritual organism, and to be negligent about the one is to seriously impair and imperil the other." It was a saying of Lowell's that there are some people who have the idea of God fattened out of them.

Defiled by Tobacco

The tobacco habit is an unclean master. A clean mouth, sweet breath, untainted clothes, apartments free from the stale odor, are hard things for an habitual smoker to manage. This point needs no elaboration. But if a proof is wanted, I only ask a glance at the floor of the smokers' side of a ferry or the smoking car of a train, and a sniff of the atmosphere after a few minutes of the crowd's unrestrained enjoyment of the weed, and—what is quite as significant—a note of the contrast in appearance between the men who crowd these places and those who seek cleaner floors and purer air.

It is an unhealthy master. It corrupts the sense of taste, injures the stomach, deadens the sensibilities, causes cancers and heart troubles. I can count half a dozen personal friends at this moment who know, on physicians' authority, that further continuance of smoking means shortened days, perhaps sudden death. Only one or two, however, have been strong enough to give it up.—Archer Brown.

Any Excess Is Vicious

"Over almost everything save our virtues there might be written the condemnation—too much," says Dr. David Swing. The girl who drinks from six to ten glasses of soda water every day, as one girl I know is doing, the boy who is exercising himself into uselessness for anything but athletics, the woman who reads all the murders and burglaries and other crimes she can find in several daily papers, the man who takes such great chances in business that it amounts practically to gambling, all these are preparing for themselves a time of retribution.

You have read the Arabian Nights' Entertainments and recall the story about the Merchant and a Jinn. A Jinn is the name the Arabs give to a spirit which they say is usually invisible, but which has the power to become visible and assume many different shapes. The Merchant had stopped in the shade of a grove to eat his lunch of dates, and as he ate he threw away the stones. Soon a monstrous Jinn appeared to him, sword in hand, and cried out, "Rise up that I may kill thee, as thou hast killed my son." "I kill your son!" exclaimed the frightened Merchant, "I did not know him, and never saw him." "Did you not," demanded the Jinn, "take dates out of your portmanteau, and, as you ate them, throw the stones about on both sides?" "I cannot deny it," answered the Merchant. "At that time," the Jinn explained, "my son was passing by, and you threw one of the stones at his eye, which killed him; therefore I must kill you."

There are many girls and boys who do not think they are doing anything especially wrong in taking the soda water or smoking the cigarette, and they may be

as surprised as was this Merchant when they find out the result of their actions. They will find, however, that consequences are as unpitying as this fabled Jinn.

Intemperance Springs from Lack of Self-Control

Intemperance is one of the most contemptible and loathsome habits into which one may fall. It is also one of the most dangerous. It springs from the lack of self-control, and it destroys what little self-control may still exist.

A person who "drinks" gives up all self-command. He is like a man who, in a perilous region throws the reins over his horse's back and lets him take what course he will. The best tempered man, when he has drunk too much, may become quarrelsome; the kindest hearted one may become brutal and cruel; the most sensible one may become a fool; and all become alike ridiculous.

One great peril about this matter of drink is that one who indulges in it may reach a point where he has no mastery of himself. I suppose that there is nothing more terrible than the drunkard's thirst. It is stronger than his love for his parents or his wife or his children, stronger than his love of respectability, stronger than his dread of poverty or ridicule. It is a burning thirst, terrible in its torment and never to be satisfied in its demands.

In some, this thirst is kindled much more easily than in others, but there are none who are wholly free from the peril of it, and no one can tell in advance how soon his turn may come.

Far above the falls of Niagara one may row down the river and turn back when he will. But as he goes down farther, there comes a point beyond which he cannot turn back. The trouble is that he can never know when he is reaching that point. He thinks that he is safe and will turn back: but the stream has him in its power, and hurries him on, down towards the terrible plunge of the cataract. So it is when one begins to drink intoxicating liquor. He cannot tell in advance when the point is reached beyond which he is helpless.—C. C. Everett, in Ethics for Young People.

Why We Have the Prohibition Law

I cannot speak for temperance more effectually than to quote old Uncle Calhoun Webster. He said: "When I see a man a-goin' home wid a gallon o' whiskey and a half-pound o' meat, dat's temperance lecture enough for me—an' I see it ebery day. An' I knows dat ebery-t'ing in dat man's house am on de same scale—a gallon o' misery to every half-gallon o' comfort."—Booker Washington.

Self-Control for the Common Good

Big changes never come suddenly. Nothing important happens suddenly. The thing that appears to happen suddenly is the culmination of a long struggle of one sort or another. We have forgotten the long, slow process by which the world has gradually made up its mind to get rid of booze. Just to refresh my memory, I have been to the library to look into the history of the thing. I did not get to the bottom of the story. I got so far back into the past that the dust of the ages began to tickle my throat, so I quit. When I read that a Chinese emperor—eleven hundred years before Christ—threatened to have all the grapevines pulled up because his people drank too much of the wine made from grapes, I considered that I wasn't exactly on the trail of a fresh sensation.

Right in our own country, a powerful and ever-growing campaign against booze has been going on for a hundred and fifty years. Your grandmother was probably in it. Didn't she meet every Friday afternoon with the W.C.T.U. ladies, and join in the weekly growl over those highly colored maps showing man's red innards eaten up by rum? Of course she did; and don't you forget that what she did for the "great cause" helped put the finishing touches on old John Barleycorn.

But what was the final blow that knocked rum out? I should say that it was the modern world's passion for doing things efficiently. This is particularly true of the United States. From my office window here in New York I can see the elevated railways, the street cars, steamships, river craft of every kind, and thousands of automobiles. Underground, the roar of the subways and railroad trains is heard. This morning nine airplanes flew over our building in a bunch. It is the age of machinery. I think the explanation of the final downfall of rum lies right here. When man worked alone with simple tools or just with his hands, he could not do much damage to himself or to others if he got drunk. If he were chopping wood alone in a forest, for instance, and had one of those grand medieval

jags we read about, he would be more likely to lay down his ax and go to sleep than to chop himself up indiscriminately.

But a drunken man at an engine throttle—or in charge of expensive lightning-propelled machinery—kills himself, kills others, and wrecks valuable property.

I can almost hear the modern gasoline engine speaking to us somewhat as follows: "You human beings made me. I am powerful. I can do wonders. I have no mind, however. You still must furnish the brains. Whoever touches me can start me off. I respond, whether handled by a wise man, a fool, or a sot. Then, beware! You had better keep sober if you want me around."

The faster we go, the greater our need for steadiness. Not only because we can be hurt, but because we can hurt others. So out from modern civilization is staggering that old blunderbuss, King Booze.—Editor of the American Magazine.

The Klean Kids' Klub

There was a certain small town where there was much lawlessness. Vice was unrestrained. There seemed to be no check on any evil thing. What was worse, there was no one who seemed to care so very much except a certain woman who had two boys of her own.

The boys heard their father and mother discussing the town's evil affairs and, in considering it, they wondered if they could not do something to help better things. They talked it over with some other boys and, to their surprise, they found a number who were disgusted with the sad things they saw going on. The result was the organizing of "The Klean Kids' Klub."

The principles agreed upon were three—"Clean Minds, Clean Hearts and Clean Habits." If any boy, no half-way measures being allowed, did not want to subscribe to these principles he was not wanted.

The meeting-place was in a barn or in the house of one of the boys. The time of meeting was on Friday afternoon or early evening, every week. The meeting-place was not regular. It was indicated by a white cloth, in three parts, tacked to a barn, if the meeting was there, or to a house, if the meeting was there. This signal was not put out until Friday morning and the boys had to hunt for it.

To get into lodge each boy had to knock three times, three times repeated. Then when the guard came out, no matter how well the boy was known, he had to place the three fingers of his right hand upon his forehead, over his heart and his right side to denote the principles—"Clean Minds, Clean Hearts and Clean Bodies."

To the surprise of the organizers there were many applications for membership. Boys seem to get to know very quickly what is going on. Why this rush for membership? As one boy put it, "You know that there is a whole lot of things a boy gets into that do him harm. He gets in before he knows it and then he is so smeared over that he thinks he has to stay smeared. It's best for him to keep out, and here is a good place to go to keep out and get help to keep out. It's easy to go crooked and do badly. It's not so easy to go straight; that takes strength and grip. I, for myself, want to amount to something and that is why I am for 'The Klean Kids' Klub.'"—Henry T. Sell, in Sermons in Objects.

Sentence Sermons

The chief baker can minister to self-indulgence as well as the chief butler.

Strong of body, strong of soul,
Firm of purpose to control,
He will spurn the tempting bowl,
In the shadow of the vine.
No taint of wine in his full brain,
No trembling hand will hold the rein,
When he who rules shall drink no wine.—George Bungay.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What ideas about work do you get from all our selections? 2. From which one of the Ten Commandments is our second selection taken? 3. What do Proverbs 10.4; 13.4; 18.9 say about workers and shirkers? 4. What work did Jesus do before he began his public ministry? 5. Is mental labor more honorable than manual labor? 6. What makes any work honorable? 7. What makes any work dishonorable? 8. Why should you prepare yourself for useful work?

LESSON III—OCTOBER 20

USEFUL WORK A CHRISTIAN DUTY

GOLDEN TEXT: If any will not work, neither let him eat. 2 Thessalonians 3.10

LESSON Genesis 2.15; Exodus 20.9; Nehemiah 6.3; John 5.17; 9.4; Acts 20.33-35; 2 Thessalonians 3.6-12; Ephesians 4.28
DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 8.1-9

GENESIS 2.15 And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

EXODUS 20.9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work.

NEHEMIAH 6.3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

JOHN 5.17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work.

JOHN 9.4 We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

ACTS 20.33 I coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Ye yourselves know that these hands ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 In all things I gave you an example, that so laboring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

2 THESSALONIANS 3.6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us. 7 For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; 8 neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you: 9 not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an example unto you, that ye should imitate us. 10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat. 11 For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

EPHESIANS 4.28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. GOD ORDAINED WORK, Genesis 2.15. In the story of the Garden of Eden, we are told that God placed man there to cultivate and care for it. The work was waiting for him.

"With the Christian conception of God, we cannot believe that work has been made a human necessity merely to supply the body with food and other material things. With one creative word God could have met the material needs of all mankind and for all time. The word was not spoken, because character and intelligence were meant to be the first fruits of labor, and material things by-products. This is shown by the moral and intellectual evils which follow and degrade those who yield to absolute idleness. Civilization is at its highest in those lands where the climate is most productive to labor. Where work is declined, evil must be accepted" (Thomas Tiplady).

II. MAN MUST WORK, Exodus 20.9. We think of the Fourth Commandment as directing the keeping of the Sabbath aright, and often forget that it first of all directs us to labor on the six other days. It enforces the six days' work as well as the seventh day's rest.

"No man is born into the world whose work
Is not born with him. There is always work
And tools to work withal, for those who will:
And blessed are the horny hands of toil" (Lowell).

III. THE PRIOR IMPORTANCE OF WORK, Nehemiah 6.3. Four times Nehemiah's enemies, Sanballet and Geshem, sent an urgent request to him to meet them for a conference on the Plains of Ono. That they wished to do him harm, was plain. Of course Nehemiah could not be so easily duped, but what a great answer was his: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the

work cease (as it undoubtedly would without his directing, impelling power), while I leave it and come down to you?" His answer would have been the same had the invitation been for pleasure or his own advantage in any way. He stood in the path of duty, and therefore in the very line of God's will, and he would not budge an inch. The greatness, the overwhelming importance of his work of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, the priority of its demands to all things else, filled his mind and heart.

Would that there were the same sense of the greatness of work, however seemingly humble, done for God today! Would that there were a similar realization of the satisfaction which comes from doing one's work well!

IV. DIVINE TOIL, John 5.17. Jesus had recently healed a sufferer on the Sabbath, and had bade him carry home his bed. The Pharisees charged Jesus with Sabbath-breaking, and in defence Jesus said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." The working of God was a sufficient warrant for his own work, even on the Sabbath, for Jesus "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," claimed the prerogatives of Deity.

"No amount of wealth sets one free from the obligation to work in a world the God of which is ever working" (George Macdonald).

V. THE TIME FOR WORK IS SHORT, John 9.4. Jesus realized that his death was close at hand, that he must do his deeds of mercy while he could. "The night cometh when no man can work," he added. Scarcely any other of his words give us so clear a realization of his humanity as these words about the shortness of time for work. How strenuous were those brief years of his public ministry!

On the dial-stone at Abbotsford, Walter Scott had these words carved: "I must work while it is called day; for the night cometh when no man can work." Over the mantel in his Brattleboro home Rudyard Kipling had inscribed the words, "The night cometh when no man can work." Dr. Maltbie D. Babcock felt the same urge for work when he pasted on one side of his desk the words, "Do it now." When Stanley found Livingstone in the heart of Africa, he begged him to return home. Livingstone was old and feeble; he was destitute of men and means to enable him to make much progress. But, like Paul, none of these things moved him. "No, no," he said to Stanley, "to be knighted by the Queen and welcomed by thousands of admirers would be pleasant, but it is impossible. It must not be. I must finish my task."

"This is the gospel of labor, ring it, ye bells of the kirk!
The Lord of Love came down from above, to live with the men who work.
This is the rose that he planted, here in the thorn-curst soil:
Heaven is blessed with perfect rest, but the blessing of Earth is toil."

VI. PAUL'S EXAMPLE IN WORKING FOR HIMSELF AND FOR OTHERS, Acts 20.33-35. On his way to Jerusalem for the last time, Paul sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, and in his speech to them there he referred to his work while with them. He reminded them that he had coveted no one's possessions—silver or gold or apparel—and with his own hands had labored to provide for his necessities and of those with him. Paul was a tent-maker, a maker of goat's hair cloth which was used for the black tents of the nomad tribes. He had worked at his trade. He exhorted them to follow his example and work with their hands so that they might have the wherewithal to help the weak, the poor and the sick. And he bade them keep in mind the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Paul worked with his hands, but he also worked with his brain and his heart. His work at tentmaking was honorable and necessary, but what a loss to the world if he had been content to labor with his hands only! "It is not a disgrace to do any lowly work if you do it well, but it is wrong to continue at lowly work that a thousand others might do almost as well as you when you have the ability and the opportunity for training yourself to difficult and exacting work of great responsibility that not one person in a thousand could ever learn to do well. Abraham Lincoln was, perhaps, the best rail-splitter in the State of Illinois, and he was proud of the fact that he could split a good rail; but the world could not have measured its loss if

Lincoln had been satisfied to split rails always when God had given him the greatness of soul to save a nation in the hour of its peril."

VII. IF ANY WILL NOT WORK, NEITHER LET HIM EAT, 2 Thessalonians 3.6-12. Paul had told the Christians of Thessalonica about the second coming of Christ. They had taken his words to mean that at any moment the end of the world might come, and some of them had neglected their Christian duties. Paul wrote them to shun the brother who was thus "disorderly," who did not live as he had taught them to live. He appealed to his own life among them and they knew they should follow his example. He had not behaved himself disorderly among them; "he had not been a wild enthusiast, preaching unsettling doctrines at street corners." Nor had he eaten food at the expense of others; on the contrary, he had worked night and day to avoid being a burden to any of them. This he had done, not because he had not the right to be supported, he added. Paul always believed and taught that the Christian teacher was worthy of his hire, that like a Greek philosopher, he had a right to be supported by those whom he taught, yet he had labored with his own hands because he wished to make himself an example to them, that they might imitate him. Even while with them, he reminded them, he had ordered that if any one would not work, he should not eat. He had heard that some of them interfered with the work of others. These he commanded to work quietly and eat their own bread. "That Paul so preached in a population inclined to depend on the state for bread, or to exist on the odd jobs of a seaport town, was one cause of the growth of his church. Missionaries in India still have to preach the same practical religion in opposition to the dreaminess and self-inflicted beggary of the native people."

"To read in the Bible, as the word of God himself, that 'in the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread,' and to preach therefrom that 'in the sweat of other men's faces shalt thou eat bread,' to my mind can scarcely be reconciled with honest sincerity" (Abraham Lincoln).

VIII. WORK IN ORDER TO SHARE WITH OTHERS, Ephesians 4.28. To the Ephesians Paul wrote: Let him that stole, steal no more. Instead of robbing others, let him work with his hands at worthwhile labor, in order that he may earn something to share with others.

"Much of the world's work is done for love, for wife and children, for the aged, the frail, and the sick. It is the divine tax levied on strength. The true and only dignity of labor is that it is done for love. But this motive has not carried us far if it only takes us the length of enduring work for the sake of kith and kin. When we say that work is a duty for the sake of others, we mean a larger and wider relationship. The Christian motive transcends the ties of blood and family and friendship. So work is a duty to society, and not merely to a few individuals. We owe all we have and are to our fellows, and the only way we have of paying the debt is to take our share of the burden. Work is a practical acceptance of the truth that no man liveth to himself, and that a self-centered life is a social offense" (Hugh Black).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Working night and day, 2 Thessalonians 3.8. Paul taught the principle which marked the Jew from the other races of the East, and from the Greek and Roman. Work is honorable. Every boy must learn a trade. "Hate not laborious work," says Sirach, "neither husbandry, which the Most High has ordained." A certain Simeon was in the time of Christ a skilled digger of wells and ditches. He said one day to a great rabbi, "I am no less necessary to the Commonwealth than you." An old Jewish proverb says, "The man who teaches his son no trade teaches him highway robbery." The Greeks, on the contrary, despised a working man.—A. F. Mitchell.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

It was Robert Louis Stevenson who said, "I know what pleasure is, for I have done good work." That was a fine sentiment, and anyone has missed the very best out of his life who has not discovered the joy there is in doing well some

worthy piece of work. Especially is this true in such a service as working or teaching in a Sunday-school. There are two reasons for this: one is that the work itself is so fascinating; and the other is that thoughtful study and training add so much to efficiency and skill. One who is blessed with the spirit of a teacher and who will take the trouble to become proficient in his work, has the opportunity to enter into one of the finest experiences of human life. Such a one can gain the affection of pupils who will remember him with gratitude through life; he can have a part with the Spirit of God in awakening the divine life within their hearts; he can see the development of that most wonderful thing in the world—a human soul; and he can lay up treasures in heaven that will be an everlasting inheritance.—From an Editorial in the Sunday-School World.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE GAMBLING SPIRIT HURTFUL TO BUSINESS AND MORALS

Beginning the Lesson

We have today eight short texts, all of them about work. The wonder is, not that we have so many, but that our Lesson Committee could content themselves with just these and no more. How many verses from the Psalms, Proverbs, Gospels and Paul's letters might have been given! But we are somewhat surprised at the special topic assigned for our group in connection with these texts: "The Gambling Spirit Hurtful to Business and Morals." There is so much that we should like to say about work—the need for it, the universality of it, no one being rightfully exempt from it, the blessedness of it, the joy of it, and so on. Possibly our Committee concluded that no adult who attends a church school can be a shirker, or unconscious of all these interesting aspects of the subject, and that, as the desire to get something for nothing, without working for it, the gambling spirit, is stalking through the land, it should be discussed.

But what do our texts say about work?

What Jesus Thinks about Work

One of the most striking characteristics of the teaching of Jesus is the fact that the people whom he selects for commendation are almost invariably people at work, and that the pictures in which he describes the kingdom of God are for the most part pictures of the daily work of the common world. Servants and house-holders, porters and stewards, ploughmen and sowers, these are the figures that come and go across the pages of the New Testament. They do not go out of their way to become Christians; they find their discipleship just where they are, in the doing of their daily work.

A great many people are apt to think of religion as a thing set apart, in a special region of experience to be taken—as we say in a university—as "an extra," not in the regular curriculum of life. Religion seems to them like a rare flower. or a fruit grown out of season, instead of the bread and water of their daily life, Sometimes a college student excuses himself for not learning his lessons on the ground that he has been engaged in "Christian work," forgetting that the most immediate Christian work in a college is precisely that learning of lessons which had seemed an alternative to the discipleship of Christ. Sometimes a man in the business world proposes to atone for hardness in making money by softness in distributing money, as though a Christian could be divided like a vessel, into watertight compartments, so that if one part should sink, the other part might hold it up.

The teaching of Jesus is a constant protest against a divided life, an ethical bi-metallism. The test of Christian discipleship in a man of business is not so much the way he gives his money as the way he makes his money. The place of religion is not in one's extra hours, but in one's working hours. The sphere of religion is not in a compartment of life, but in the whole of life.

One of the earliest and most interesting evidences of Christian teaching is the papyrus fragment discovered in 1887 among the rubbish heaps of the Nile, on which are inscribed seven short sentences, each beginning with the phrase, "Jesus says." Six of these sayings are practically repetitions of phrases already familiar in the Gospels, but the fifth saying is new; and though its meaning has been much debated, it appears to confirm the teaching of Jesus concerning the gospel of work. "Jesus says: Smite the rock and thou shalt find me; cleave the wood and there am I." The quarryman, driving his drill under the hot Eastern sun, finds his Master looking up at him from the task well done; the carpenter at his bench, fitting the joints

of his work true to his pattern, meets the Lord Jesus Christ as though in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth.—Francis Greenwood Peabody, in Mornings in the College Chapel.

Fares, Please!

To some people the art of life consists in evading the fare. Some steal a ride. On the lowest rung of the social ladder they are called tramps. Higher up they are often called clever.

Some ride on a pass. This pass is handed to them by others, usually ancestors, in the shape of money, position, or talent. Some one else pays their way, and they accept it complacently as the proper thing. No sense of debt goes with it. Fortunately, such a through trip in a Pullman is no longer regarded as so praiseworthy an achievement as it once was. The inheritance tax, the income tax, the corporation tax, each is a loud stentorian "Fares, please!"

Some ride on a child's ticket. They pay half fare. To the world's demand for a strong man's stint of work and service they pleadingly insist that they are only twelve years old and must be let off with giving to the world a half portion as their share. They do not ask to be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease; all they ask is to be allowed to go in a perambulator.

Some pay. These are the ones who make the world morally solvent. They take no delight in dodging. Their lives are lifted out of triviality and insignificance by the ennobling power of a great obligation.—Halford E. Luccock.

The Ethics of the Gambling Spirit

Gambling is bidding fair to outstrip drunkenness as a national vice. There is a fearful epidemic of it in all classes of society, from the Bridge of the wealthy to the games of chance practised by the boys and girls in the streets. Nothing can more certainly undermine the national character, and all that is noblest and purest, because it is based on pure selfishness.

The masters of English literature have condemned this deadly evil. Ruskin says: "Gambling is the vilest of ungentlemanly habits, for the essence of true gentlemanliness is consideration for the feelings, interests and needs of others." Charles Kingsley speaks in the same strain: "Betting and gambling of every kind, is in itself immoral. It is intended to take money from your neighbor's pocket without giving anything in return." Herbert Spencer's words are specially emphatic and memorable: "Gambling is gain without merit. It is gain through the loss of another. The happiness of the winner implies the misery of the loser. This kind of action is therefore essentially anti-social, sears the sympathies, cultivates a hard egoism, and so produces a general deterioration of character."

The whole land is impoverished by it. Sir R. Griffin has estimated that $50,000,000 of the national wealth of England passes into the hands of "the bookies," who do not raise a finger to increase the good of the commonwealth.

The Churches must stand clear of complicity with this evil. They have no right to permit raffling at bazaars or the raising of money by whist drives; and the time will come, we trust, when it will be illegal for the daily press to aid and abet this pernicious habit.—F. B. Meyer.

The Effect of Gambling on Morals and Health

If any youthful reader is addicted to gambling, I will not tell him that it is wrong and foolish; I will suggest that it is probably shortening his life. Does gambling, you ask, lead to physical degeneration? That is the deliberate opinion of many experienced doctors. Sir B. W. Richardson used to say that all professional gamblers had weak hearts. The intoxication of gambling is quite as bad as that which follows a drinking bout. It weakens a man's will, leads him to neglect his business, fills him with wearing anxiety, and, when he loses, tempts him to steal. It is true that there is excitement in legitimate business, but it is not so chronic or so maddening as the desperate fever of the gambler. The tormenting anxiety of gambling quickens the heart-beats, the over-worked heart is weakened, health is destroyed and very often life is shortened. Avarice, with all its fret and fury, not only blunts the finer feelings and leads to moral decadence—it also narrows the mind, squanders the nervous energy, and enfeebles the body.—Frederick A. Atkins, in Life Worth While.

The Long View of the Gambling Spirit

That gambling is wrong might be a difficult thing to prove, looking at it

theoretically and academically, or up in the air, and indeed, arguments might be made for it.

We know that gambling is wrong, looking at it historically, and in the light of past human experience, for we see that its effects on character and life, personal, social, commercial and national are bad. Says a young man or woman, or an older person to us today that he or she sees no harm in the gambling game or in the sport that gives new sensations, so long as the player can afford it. Such a one sees no farther than a foot before his or her face, or across a table's breadth, or through the length of a night's amusement.

But go farther back and see it in the larger range of human perspective; see and judge it there as a passion, subtle, insidious, strong, mastering the strongest characters, becoming more intense, more imperious, and more consuming with every indulgence of it; consuming heart and soul, body and conscience; see it there and judge it. Its pathway is strewn with ruins, mental, moral, spiritual; strewn with disgrace, despair, insanity, suicide; brightest hopes blasted, fairest fame extinguished, highest types of character destroyed, and noblest forms of life wrecked. A grim and ghastly sight is a look at the work of the gambler's sport.—David H. Greer, in an Address at Yale.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. False ideas about work. See Chapter I of Work, by Hugh Black.

2. The moral need of work. See Chapter III of Work, by Hugh Black.

3. The night is coming in which no man can work. See Chaper VII of Work, by Hugh Black.

4. God intends no man to live in this world without working; but he intends every man to be happy in his work.—Ruskin.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Do men and women need to play? 2. What opportunities for recreation are there in our town? 3. Is our class doing its duty in helping to provide recreational facilities for men and boys under proper auspices? 4. What recreation facilities could our church provide? 5. Do we lead or follow the lead in the choice of the recreations prevalent in our community? 6. Women have greater leisure now than formerly: what do they do with it?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

HONEST WORK ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESS

Beginning the Lesson

In one of Alice Louise Lee's stories this dialogue takes place between a miner and the motherly woman who takes care of the boarding-house:

"Say, ma, we want you to tell what you think'll make a fellow the happiest. We've been talkin' it over, and I guess there ain't any two of us that think alike. What we mean is, happiest right along for a spell of years, you know, not just for one day."

Ma's big face dropped into lines of motherly earnestness, and ma's big heart was in her unhesitating but brief reply, "Work."

The Kid swallowed the last crumb of dumpling so hurriedly it choked him, as he sputtered, "Golly, ma! We said everything but work!"

With which one do you agree, "Ma" or the "Kid"?

Of course there are many people who have too much work to do. One of these, a poor woman who had worked hard all her life, asked to have this put on her tombstone when she died—"I am going to do nothing for ever and ever." Do you think she could be happy if she could have her wish?

Work is the right thing, and the right amount of it brings happiness. It is the worker and not the shirker who is the happier. Jesus believed in work. What kind of work did he do at Nazareth between the ages of twelve and thirty? What did he say about his work in our texts from the Gospel of John?

What lesson about work do we get from the second chapter of Genesis? From the twentieth chapter? What did Nehemiah think about the importance of his work? What kind of work did Paul do? What did he say about it to the elders of Ephesus? About work in his letter to the Thessalonians? In his letter to the Ephesians?

Work Is Noble

All honest toil is the reflection of the activity of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. While the Jews were trifling over what a man may do on the Sabbath, Christ was working in glorious imitation of, and obedience to, his Father. Whence comes the feeling that it is lowering to work; that it is far more exalted to draw the purple robes of our idleness about us, and be waited on? The Chinese noble lets his finger nails grow into long, horny, horrid talons to prove to the world that he is not a craftsman, that he never handles tools. We have a feeling of disgust for that, but is there not in the minds of some of us a subcutaneous sympathy with him?

This feeling that work is ignoble does not come from God. He works; and when, in olden times, he would choose men for his own special commissions, he called a David from his flock, or a Saul from his farm, or a Gideon from his threshing-floor. To the Church at Antioch he said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Right from their daily work he called them. Did he choose idlers? Certainly not—he had work to be done.

The idea does not come from Christ. He works, too. His life was ceaseless activity—no leisure, so much as to eat. It is the glory of toil that his hands were hardened and calloused by labor.

The Boy Jesus at Work

The idea does not come from the apostles. Listen to Paul's strenuous rule for the idle Thessalonians: "Whoso will not work, neither let him eat."

It does not come from our first parents—they had a garden to take care of. Toil was not the curse on them, for they toiled before the Fall. The care of that garden must have been beautiful work.

But this idea that toil is ignoble must have originated somewhere. Perhaps it came from the old feudal system, where some were to fight, and some were to stay at home and work; and the glory gathered round the fighters. That was a very primitive state of society. It prevailed among the North American Indians—the braves went to war, or they hunted; and the squaws did the housework, the baking, the farming. This division, of those who work and those who war, prevails only in a most rudimentary social state; but in a more refined form it obtains

among us—the served and the servant. It must be a part of the abnormal attitude of our fallen nature towards life.

Whatever your social setting, find your work, and do it faithfully. Your Father and your Brother work. You get far more tired of what you have than of what you do. Just think of it, and see if it is not so. Combined with it must be consideration for others. There must be community of interest with others, and a sympathetic adjustment of our activities to them.—Condensed from the Joy of Work, by Maltbie D. Babcock.

Honest Work Essential to Success

Cardinal Gibbons declared that any young man with a streak of idleness in him would better make up his mind at the beginning that mediocrity is to be his lot. "Without immense, sustained effort he will not climb high," he continued. "And even though fortune or chance were to lift him high he would not stay there. For to keep at the top is harder, almost, than to get there."

Livingstone was of the same mind. "I find," said that great African explorer in addressing the workingmen of Glasgow, "that all eminent men work hard." The last address which Livingstone gave in Scotland was at a boys' school, and his parting advice to them was to "fear God and work hard."

Leonardo da Vinci was a tremendous worker who won pre-eminence as a painter, a sculptor, an architect, an engineer, an inventor, and a man of science. Of course you have seen reproductions of two of his masterpieces, The Last Supper and Mona Lisa. Even to a genius like Leonardo the rewards came in response to work. This he recognized, for he wrote in his note book: "Thou, O God, dost sell us all good things at the price of labor."

"I would give half my life to be able to play like you," exclaimed an admirer to an eminent violinist. "That, madam," he returned, "is exactly what I have given to do it."

"It is not who you are that counts. It is what you do," a leading principal of a New York school tells his pupils. And it was Carlyle who defined genius as "The infinite art of taking pains."

If Any Will Not Work, Neither Let Him Eat

Do you know what a parasite is? Do you know what the word *parasite* literally means? One who eats at another's table. There are lazy little organisms that will not work for their own bread, so to speak, and steal their living, and subsist on the bodies of other plants or animals. Paul declared of himself, "Neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's table, but in labor and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you." Paul was not a parasite. And no one has a right to be one, unless he is totally disabled and unable to do anything.

Captain John Smith, who was elected president of the Virginia Colony in 1608, returned from his expedition against the Indians and found that during his absence nothing had been done in the colony. There was a group of gentlemen at Jamestown who had never done any work, did not know how to do any work, and did not propose to learn how to work. Smith assembled all the men and talked to them very plainly. "He that will not work—unless disabled by sickness—shall not eat," he cried, "for the labors of thirty or forty honest and industrious men shall not be consumed to maintain an hundred and fifty idle loiterers. Little honey hath that hive where there are more drones than bees; and miserable is that land, where more are idle than are well-employed." Smith set them all at work, and they found that it was work or starve. The idlers died or went away.

Sentence Sermons

We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift:
Shun not the struggle; face it; 'tis God's Gift.—Maltbie D. Babcock.

It is one of the high spots in the life of the growing youth, when he discovers that he has a contribution to make to the world's work.—Henry van Dyke.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What invitations to social festivities did Jesus accept? (John 2.1-11; 12.1, 2; Mt. 9.9, 10; Lk. 7.36; 11.37; 14.1.) 2. What do you think was his attitude toward recreation? 3. What does play do for us? 4. What kind of recreation do you like best? 5. What do you do with your leisure? 6. What are the recreations of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts? 7. What can our church do for the recreation of its young people?

LESSON IV—OCTOBER 27

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF RECREATION

GOLDEN TEXT: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. John 10.10

LESSON Jeremiah 31.12, 13; Zechariah 8.5; Matthew 11.16-19; Mark 2.18-28; 6.30-32; John 2.1-11. DEVOTIONAL READING Philippians 4.4-9

MARK 2.18 And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting: and they come and say unto him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not? 19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day. 21 No man seweth a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made. 22 And no man putteth new wine into old wine-skins; else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins: but *they put* new wine into fresh wine-skins.

23 And it came to pass, that he was going on the sabbath day through the grainfields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears. 24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? 25 And he said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was hungry, he, and they that were with him? 26 How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him? 27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: 28 so that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. JESUS' RELIGIOUS TEACHING A CALL TO JOYOUSNESS, verses 18-20. The strict Jews, like the Pharisees in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, fasted twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. The disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees fasted, but the disciples of Jesus did not. The former went to Jesus and complained because his disciples did not observe the fast. "Can the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?" Jesus asked. The friends of the bridegroom conducted the bride and her companions to the house of the bridegroom with singing and playing of musical instruments, and they remained there for a week of feasting and mirth. The Talmud absolved them even from prayer and worship during such festivities. "As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast," continued Jesus, "but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day."

"When Christ has withdrawn from the soul, when times of darkness hide or experiences of sin banish him from the soul, or the strong need of a clearer sense of his presence overcomes the desire for food, or a failure in doing work indicates a lack of his presence and power (Mt. 17.21), then there will be fasting. Fasting is truly Christian only when it is the natural expression of Christian experience" (Lyman Abbott).

II. THE COMING OF A NEW REVELATION MEANS THE REPEALING OF OLD OBSERVANCES, verses 21, 22. Then in two sayings Jesus defended the practice of John the Baptist and also of his own disciples against the attacks of the Pharisees. The saying about the new cloth and the old garments shows that John the Baptist was right in having the disciples keep the old fasts: John belonged to Judaism, his teaching was the old piece of cloth added to the old garment. But what was needed was not an improved old garment but a new one, a new life. Jesus' teaching was the new cloth which could not be patched on to the old garment. Just as the new, undressed cloth would shrink when wet and, being stronger than the old, would draw away from it and make a bigger rent, so the new truth patched on the old would later make a greater gap. Fasting befitted John's teaching: it was incongruous with Jesus' teaching.

In the saying about the new wine and old bottles Jesus shows that not only would the old be harmed but the new would be lost. Fermenting wine in a stiff, unyielding old wine-skin will burst the skin and will itself be spilled and lost. Jesus is right in not having his disciples observe the old fast days. His teaching is the new one, and the old Judaism was not capable of holding the new truth.

"Jesus bestowed on his Church an adaptiveness to various times and places not always remembered by missionaries, by fastidious critics of new movements at home, nor by men who would reduce the lawfulness of modern agencies to a question of precedent and archæology" (G. W. Chadwick).

III. I AM COME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND MAY HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY, verses 23-26. The Sabbath controversy was one of great importance in the eyes of the Pharisees. During the Jewish exile in Babylon, when sacrifices could no longer be offered in the temple, the strict keeping of the Sabbath became a chief part of the Jewish worship, and legislation multiplied in regard to the observance required. The Sabbath was the seventh day of the week. The reason why we keep the first day is thus given by Justin Martyr (second century): "Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God wrought a change in the darkness and made the world, and Jesus Christ on the same day rose from the dead." Said Alcuin, writing at the close of the eighth century: "The observance of the former Sabbath has been transferred very fittingly to the Lord's Day, by the custom and consent of the people."

One Sabbath day Jesus and his disciples were walking through the grain fields. There were no fences, and public paths led through the fields of grains. As they went along, the disciples plucked the ears, which was lawful, as Dt. 27.25 shows: "When thou comest into thy neighbor's standing grain, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thy hand, but thou shalt not move a sickle into thy neighbor's standing grain." The grain was either barley or wheat.

Table of Showbread From the Arch of Titus, Rome

Then the Pharisees complained to Jesus, saying, "Behold, why do they on the Sabbath that which is not lawful?" They held it to be unlawful because it was the Sabbath: see Light from Oriental Life. In answer, Jesus said: "Did ye never read (1 S. 21.6) what David did, when he had need, and was hungry, he and they that were with him?"

On every Sabbath day twelve fresh loaves of bread were placed in rows upon a table in the Holy Place (as symbol of communion of God with men), and the stale loaves were taken away and eaten by the priests. It was not lawful for any one else to eat them. But when David, in his flight from Saul, who was determined to kill him, came to Nob, where the tabernacle was at that time, he induced the priest to let him and those with him appease their hunger by eating the showbread. It was probably a case of Sabbath-breaking, but Jesus recalls it as an instance of the setting aside of ceremonial law for good and sufficient reasons.

"Note the tinge of irony in his question, 'Did ye never read what David did?' In all your minute study of the letter of the Scripture, did you never take heed to that page? The Pharisees had pored over the Old Testament all their lives, but it would have been long before they had found such a doctrine as this of Jesus in it" (Alexander Maclaren).

"The note which the Master sounded was a trumpet note of emancipation to a people manacled with religion. He taught them that religion is life, and life is liberty; that the true religion comes, not as frost to freeze men up, but as sunshine to set them free and bid them grow into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Lyman Abbott).

IV. JESUS THE JUDGE OF RIGHT AND WRONG PRACTICES, verses 27, 28. Jesus said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. The Sabbath is given to man as a privilege, not as a burden. Man has mental and physical needs which require a day of rest, and spiritual needs which claim a special day of worship. "It was made for man, and its maker was God. Just as God, having planted the appetite for food in us, has made food for that appetite, so God, having given us a nature requiring a Sabbath, has also made a Sabbath to meet that requirement. The Sabbath did not come by accident: it neither sprang out of the ground, nor is it a device of mere human experience. It is a divine institute, designed to bring relief and refreshment" (J. S. McClure).

The Son of Man, the Messiah, is Lord even of the Sabbath. If he permits his disciples to pluck grain on the Sabbath, the Pharisees have no right to condemn them.

"The Sabbath is a means to an end: the end is man's true welfare, the attainment by man of his true destiny. He who is himself the embodiment of that destiny, he who is himself humanity arrived at its goal, has surely a right to say how the means may best be employed" (J. M. E. Ross).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Old wine-skins, verse 22. The wine-skins in which wine was "bottled" were made of the entire skin of goats. The skin was drawn off whole, and after being tanned with oak-bark, was hung by a fire to dry and be thoroughly seasoned with smoke. The neck of the animal formed the neck of the "bottle."

His disciples began to pluck the ears, verse 23. See light from Oriental Life for Lesson XI, First Quarter.

Wine-skin "Bottles"

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

As we had a lesson in the First Quarter about the right keeping of the Sabbath, we may today profitably pass lightly over verses 23-28 of our printed text, stressing only the last two verses with their thought that right practices are those in accord with Christ's life and teaching. We shall thus have more time for our special theme, The Christian View of Recreation.

"I have discovered more than one man of eminence in my time whose career dated from the interest some grown-up took in his leisure," a writer in one of our magazines declares. Do we teachers of youth know what our pupils do with their leisure? Let us use today's opportunity to this end.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

RECREATION IN COMMUNITY LIFE

Beginning the Lesson

To Jesus the world was God's world, it was good, and it was made for men, not men for it. In his great intercessory prayer, Jesus prayed, not that God would take his followers out of the world, away from feasting and pleasure and business, but that he would keep them in the world, safe from evil. Jesus himself was concerned, not with a part of life only, but with the whole, with social as well as spiritual interests. His feasting with others not only sanctioned but hallowed all customary, social life; it did away with that division of life into what we are wont to call secular and religious, giving us instead a division that we might call indirectly religious and directly religious. For his example was rightly interpreted by Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians, Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Professor Kent says of Jesus and his social life, that, to use an expressive modern term, he was naturally "a good mixer," a man among men. There is no evidence that he ever refused an invitation to a banquet. Undoubtedly he entered this open door that leads directly to the hearts of men because he wished to win them, but he could not have done so with such grace and success had he not thoroughly enjoyed mingling with them and sharing their social joys. Tireless worker that he was, he took genuine pleasure in all forms of wholesome recreation.

Jesus' Example and Teachings Regarding the Larger Use of the Sabbath

Jesus not only swept away the ancient prohibitions which made the Jewish Sabbath a day of repression and anxiety, but he also gave to it a rich and positive meaning. It is significant that on that day he took his disciples out into the fields into touch with nature. He encouraged them in the free expression of their harmless natural impulses, even though in plucking the ears of grain they were deliberately disregarding the Pharisaic prohibitions. In the light of this specific example it is difficult to conceive that Jesus would have frowned on any use of the Sabbath which gives to toiling men rest and wholesome recreation without depriving other men of their rightful rest. It is also clear, in view of his profound emphasis on the importance of developing human personality, that he would have insisted that the form of recreation be not only wholesome, but adapted to the higher needs of each individual. The method which Jesus followed with his disciples also indicates that he appreciated the importance of change and variety in order to develop the entire man.

No teacher ever emphasized more strongly than did he the higher and more abiding sources of joy and recreation. He himself set the example of attending the synagogue on the Sabbath; but he did not stop with this merely conventional act. The Sabbath was for him a day of rich spiritual experience and activity. He made it, in the largest sense, "a day of joy and gladness." He taught by his acts that man's lordship of the Sabbath involved large responsibilities. Each hour of this unique day of rest was to be used, not only for the highest development of the individual, but also for the fullest service of his fellows. The great task remains for his followers to interpret the social spirit and attitude of Jesus toward the Sabbath into the terms of our complex modern life, and to make it again, not a day hedged in by prohibitions and shrouded by gloom, but in every sense a day of rest and growth and joyous service.—Charles Foster Kent, in The Social Teachings of Jesus.

Jesus Approved of Recreation

Contemporary Judaism was bitterly opposed to most forms of popular amusement, and especially to those which brought delight to the Græco-Roman world. In contrast to the rabbis, Jesus apparently uttered no word of protest against the sports of the stadium and amphitheater, which even in Jerusalem itself rivaled the attractions of the Jewish temple. The silence of the Gospel narratives is not of course in itself decisive, but Paul's many references to them are richly suggestive, and indicate that Jesus' greatest follower found in these sports much innocent delight. Everything which tended in a wholesome way to enlarge life and to develop personality also received his approval, even though it may have been condemned by the religious leaders of his race.

Jesus' words and acts indicate that he was aware of the importance of play in enlarging and developing the life of the individual. This appreciation best explains the irresistible way in which children were drawn to him. His interest in their amusements is well illustrated by that vivid picture of the children playing their

games in the streets which he used in describing the fickleness of his contemporaries (Mt. 11.16-19).—Charles Foster Kent, in The Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus.

A Recreation or a Pastime?

"Amusement is not the least of life's blessings, but like every blessing, it is capable of abuse, and the question is, What place does it occupy in the program of one's life? There are two words which express two ideals of amusement—the right ideal and the wrong. One is recreation. Is our amusement a recreation—something which re-creates us, makes new men of us, reinforces our mental and physical energies and sends us back with fresh zest to the strenuous business of life? Then it is a good thing. The other word is pastime, and it is a word which I would wish to have blotted out of our language if only the thing could thereby be swept from our life. If it be a mere pastime, something to pass the time, and while away the weary and unprofitable hours, then amusement is a futile and ruinous employment, surely unworthy of immortals traveling, in old Abraham Cowley's phrase, across this 'weak-built isthmus between two eternities'—the eternity whence we have come, and the eternity whither we are going, and whither with every breath, every pulse-beat, every tick of the clock, we are drawing nearer."

Recreation for the Sake of Work

To work well we must also learn how to play well. It is in this light we must judge of all recreations—do they rest or relieve the faculties which have been strained in toil, and so fit us the better to toil again? If this simple rule had but been observed it might have delivered many a man from an untimely grave or a sad breakdown in mid-career. How many have fancied they were taking rest or recreation when in reality they were still keeping on the strain! If they had only completely changed the character of their amusements they might never have known what paralysis meant.

It was a wise utterance which the Delphic oracle made in reply to the question of what pleasure consisted in: *Meden agan*—"Not too much of anything." "Temperate in all things"—only as we observe this rule can the heart be kept sweet or the powers be kept fresh. When pleasure passes the bounds of healthy rebound it becomes a temptation and not a benefit. To sojourn in pleasure is good, but he that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth.—J. Reid Howatt.

The "Movies"

It is the duty of every citizen, woman as well as man, as a social service to the community, to attend the moving pictures occasionally. Not only should the citizen demand that objectionable films which have somehow evaded censoring, be discontinued, but he should explain to the management just what is wanted. To be sure, the proprietor is not in the business as an educator, but to make money. To do this he must necessarily cater to that part of the community which attends his exhibitions. In many places the management explicitly solicits criticism and is remarkably responsive to helpful suggestions. We wonder how many of those who cry the loudest about the terrible menace of the "Movies" have ever taken this request seriously.—Reformed Church Messenger.

The Church and Amusements

No more imperative duty confronts the church than that of redefining its attitude toward "worldly pleasures" and of forming the minds and habits of young people so that they will think and act rationally in that domain of life. When the instinct for pleasure may be so easily gratified, the result in some cases is a form of intoxication. The higher faculties can be benumbed by long nights in the dance hall and by overindulgence in movies. The sweep of the tide drains energy from honest work, makes home life insipid, drives away the old-fashioned virtue of neighborliness, and leaves small space for good books and the cultivation of the inner life.

We do not better the situation by loud lamentations, by scolding or preaching or by trying to get sixteen to adopt the point of view of sixty. The first thing to do is to recognize the legitimacy of this craving. Fun is every one's birthright. Many good Christians today would be better Christians if they had more of it. Children do not wish to be limited to purely intellectual and spiritual satisfactions.

Not by banning the theater, the card table, or the dance, or by censuring their devotees will the church make its influence felt in the realm of popular pastimes, but by insisting that they shall become worthy embodiments of the play idea. The

church should vigorously coöperate with other organizations seeking to outlaw the low theater and picture house and to suppress lewd dancing in public halls.

The church should interest itself in the provision of amusements at once enjoyable and educational. This can be done, and is being done without turning the house of worship into a house of amusement. The church should not undertake to cover the whole field of entertainment, but it can initiate new and higher forms. Pageantry, with its color and movement, delights young people. It gives them something interesting and worth while to do. It instructs them concerning great episodes in Biblical, Christian and Pilgrim history. The Boy Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls movement open up new avenues of pleasure. Boys find that it is more fun to make a fire in the woods and cook a substantial meal or to handle a canoe than it is to tie a tin can to a cat's tail or to steal somebody's gate. The girls are as happy earning their beads as they are anticipating the next dance. Men and women who devote their time to leadership in these movements are erecting a powerful barrier against degrading amusements.

Still more important is it to get the right idea of the relation of pleasures to the daily round. Pleasures are the spice and garnishings of life, not its staple diet. The beautiful kingdom of pleasure yields its satisfactions when we enter it as masters and not as subjects. To drag through the day sustained only by the anticipation of a "gay old time tonight" is to miss the satisfactions to be derived from honest work, from the fundamental human relationships and from opportunities right at hand for growth and usefulness. Pleasures of the outward sort are the rightful accessories of life, but life itself as Jesus conceived of it is the splendid and the enjoyable thing—brave and victorious living, life abundant, faithful to the task of the hour in the school-room, the home, the shop, eager to know and to do and to achieve—just the ordinary round, but touched on all sides by the spirit of Christ and glorified by some sense of his companionship.—The Congregationalist.

The Church a Community Center

Millions of feet of floor space in church vestries and church schoolrooms, unused on week-nights except by a few score of the faithful, should be placed at the disposal of the boys and girls and, under sympathetic chaperonage and guidance, events and programs should be planned which will gratify their social longings and their funloving spirit. Saturday night should be made the best night of all. Demonstrate to them that the church is interested in the salvation of their social and physical life as well as in the salvation of their souls. Why should not the church building become as much of a community center as the school building? Millions of dollars are invested in stately buildings that are used but a comparatively few hours of the 168 hours in the week.

It is an economic waste as well as an artistic crime that so many of the great organs in our churches should be silent six days of the week and used but from three to four hours on Sunday. Why has not the church been as wise as the motion picture house promoter in seeing the wonderful attractive power of this noble instrument?

The army and navy have taught us how to play mass games in which many participate instead of a few highly trained specialists. Play of this sort not only recreates, but encourages team work. Many of the games require no apparatus—floor space is all that is needed. True, such "rough," active games in a church vestry would be detrimental to carpets and lace curtains, but "what shall it profit" a church if it save its carpets and lace curtains and lose its boys and girls?

How shall the Protestant church check the drift of young people toward the bright lights and the surging sea of pleasure seekers which is in evidence every Saturday night, not only in the big cities but in the smaller towns and cities? It will take more than pulpit sermons (heard by comparatively few young people) and twenty-minute church-school Bible study to undo the damage done to boys and girls seeking recreation on a single Saturday night, when church buildings are dark while amusement centers are brilliant with electric lights.

The new program of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, which seeks to enlist all the churches and character-making agencies in the community in the utilization of their personal and material resources for the promotion of such recreational activities as will re-create socially, physically, mentally and spiritually the young people of the community is one answer to the question. Such experiments are being made in a number of communities with most gratifying results thus far, and promise much in the unification of these forces in promotion of worth-while, all-round programs for young people.—H. W. Gibson, in The Church School.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Problems of recreation in our community. Making the church a recreational center.

2. The peril and the panacea of the greater amount of leisure which all classes now have. It has been suggested that the downfall of older civilizations came when the people entered into possession of leisure which they did not know how to use. Calvin Coolidge's wish is "to see all Americans have a reasonable amount of leisure. Then I want to see them educated to use such leisure for their own enjoyment and betterment and the strengthening of the quality of their citizenship."

3. Our leisure class at play. See The Christian Century, July 28, 1927.

4. The need for city playgrounds. Jacob Riis declared that if the play in the boy is not permitted to find vent, it will result in crime.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Who governed the Jews at the time of our lesson? 2. What benefits did the Jews receive from the government? 3. Who was the Cæsar in Paul's time? 4. What did Jesus himself do in regard to a tax? (Mt. 22.21.) 5. Do Paul's words counsel one to obey a law which violates a love of God? 6. Was the Prohibition Law the will of the community? 7. How can the Prohibition Law be better enforced?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS
WHAT PLAY DOES FOR US

Beginning the Lesson

Last week we discussed work, and today we discuss play. Longfellow said that work was his play. What do you think about that? Well, do you agree with Shakespeare when he says:

> If all the year were playing holidays,
> To sport would be as tedious as to work?

There is such a thing as getting too much of even a good thing, is there not? We will all agree that play is a good thing, that the old saying, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" is true, but we also know that all play and no work would make Jack a bored boy.

Our general topic today is The Christian view of Recreation, that is, the view of recreation which corresponds to Christ's view of it. What are the words of our Golden Text? Who spoke them? Can we have abundant life if it is all work? The Gospels show that Jesus was a genial Man, and we do not often enough think about this side of his character. We are told several times of his being a guest at some feast, and it was at a wedding in Cana that he wrought his first miracle. "The Son of Man came eating and drinking," we are told. He was concerned, not with a part of life only, but with the whole, with social as well as spiritual interests, with play as well as work.

What Play Does for Us

Nature demands the joyous alternation of work and play. Every person whose life is to be robust and hearty must have his periods of play. Recreation must turn his thoughts into new channels, relieve the pressure upon the brain and the tension upon the nerves, and give tone and vigor to the muscles and vital organs.

Some one has said that it is work that transforms a boy into a man; but it is also to be said that the boy of promise plays. If any boy says that he would rather sit and study than go to the playground, take a good look at him. Either he is sick, or prematurely developed, or he is a little humbug, trying to get credit for studious tastes under false pretenses.

Don't be ashamed of the fact that you love to play and that you sometimes leave your lessons behind with a sense of relief, and hurry away to the athletic field or the gymnasium, or to the familiar haunts of your friends and playmates.

It was noted, years ago, by Dr. Wiese, that the young men of Rugby and Eton did not play in order to develop their muscles, expand their lungs, quicken their circulation, improve their figures, or add grace to their bearing. They thought of none of these things. They simply played, from the mere love of playing, and all these and many other benefits were the results.

What is the purpose of play? The first answer to this question is that the

impulse to play secures physical development. The bodily frame is to be built up and made strong and supple for use. The law of its growth is exercise. The love of play secures it. The sense organs are also trained. Many sports are as admirably adapted to train and quicken the senses as they are to strengthen the muscles.

Play trains the intellectual powers. In few persons does the intellect ever attain its full development. It is like an organ of many keyboards and stops; the danger is that its possessor will acquire the use of only a small part of them. Education consists largely in awakening these slumbering powers and revealing the harmonies which nature makes possible. Play brightens the mental processes and adds gladsome tints to activities which would otherwise be prosaic.

Play cultivates a habit of glad and generous appreciation; a disposition to be easily pleased; a joy in companionship and intellectual converse. What is more valuable than a cheerful spirit and a ready sympathy? Nature intends that the impulse to play shall quicken the lighter emotions, and infuse gladness and vivacity and sparkle into the mind's activities. Those who play together quickly become friends.

The sports of childhood and youth train the will. Games of strength or skill appeal to each contestant to put forth his utmost efforts. Again and again the test recurs, and each time the will marshals all the forces at its command to attain the end desired. Thus the man learns in his youth to meet competitors, to surmount obstacles, to face an opponent, to unite his efforts with those of others.

Play lays the foundation for strength by the exercise which it calls forth,—strength of body, strength of mind,—and then it trains and invigorates the directive power which is to use it.

Three principles may guide us in the pursuit of recreation:

1. Play should be invigorating. Its purpose is to promote cheerfulness, buoyancy, and a healthful glow. If it is athletic, it should quicken the circulation and purify the blood. If it is mental, it should be interesting enough to divert the thoughts from their previous channels. If it is both athletic and mental, double benefit will be received. It should be hearty and somewhat exciting; it fails of its purpose if it is too quiet and passive. Loafing is not play.

2. Play should be innocent—not harmful to ourselves or to others.

3. Play should not be excessive. Nowhere is self-control more important than in those amusements which tempt us to excess. One's recreations afford a test of character. The strong man puts them in their true place. They are an incident, a pleasant change in the routine of his daily life. He enjoys them keenly, but he gives them up at the proper time. The weak man is absorbed by his amusements, and forgets everything else. They usurp the place of his work, blind his reason, and stifle his conscience.—Condensed from Work and Play, by John E. Bradley.

The Law of Clean Play

The good American plays fair. Clean play increases and trains one's strength, and helps one to be more useful to one's country. Therefore:

1. I will not cheat, nor will I play for keeps or for money. If I should not play fair, the loser would lose the fun of the game, the winner would lose his self-respect, and the game itself would become a mean and often cruel business.
2. I will treat my opponent with politeness.
3. If I play in a group game, I will play not for my own glory but for the success of my team and the fun of the game.
4. I will be a good loser or a generous winner.—The Prize Code of Conduct.

Sentence Sermons

"Nothing is true pleasure that is not pleasant to remember."

The opposite of work is not idleness, but play.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What was the "tribute"? 2. How did the Pharisees think their question would "ensnare" Jesus? 3. Who wrote the Epistle to the Romans? 4. Why do ministers often pray for those in authority? 5. What did Jesus teach concerning obedience to law? 6. What did Paul teach? 7. What did Peter teach? 8. How do you regard one who fails to obey any law of our land?

RESPECT FOR RIGHTFUL AUTHORITY (WORLD'S TEMPERANCE SUNDAY)

GOLDEN TEXT: Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers. Romans 13.1

LESSON Mark 12.13-17; Romans 13.1-14; 1 Peter 2.13-17

DEVOTIONAL READING Matthew 5.13-20

MARK 12.13 And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, that they might catch him in talk. 14 And when they were come, they say unto him, Teacher, we know that thou art true, and carest not for any one; for thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God: Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? 15 Shall we give, or shall we not give? But he, knowing their hypocrisy, said unto them, Why make ye trial of me? bring me a denarius, that I may see it. 16 And they brought it. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? And they said unto him, Cæsar's. 17 And Jesus said unto them, Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's. And they marvelled greatly at him.

ROMANS 13.1 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the *powers* that be are ordained of God. 2 Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: 4 for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. 5 Wherefore *ye* must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience's sake. 6 For this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing. 7 Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute *is due;* custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

1 PETER 2.13 Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; 14 or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16 as free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

1. JESUS TEACHES RESPECT FOR LAW, Mark 12.13-17. The Pharisees had resolved to compass the death of Jesus. How could they accomplish this? They decided to attempt to ensnare him in his talk, so that they could report something he said as treason, and thus secure from the Roman Governor his death sentence. Craftily keeping themselves in the background, they sent certain Pharisees and Herodians to him with that object in view. The Herodians were the court party, a small class who resented the Roman rule but favored the kingship of the house of Herod and meant to be on good terms with the government at any cost. This alliance of Pharisees and Herodians, who hated each other, shows how great was their common hatred of Jesus.

"Teacher," the deputation began, "we know that thou art true, and carest not for any one; for thou regardest not the person of men, but of a truth teachest the way of God." By this preamble they meant that the question they were about to propound was a dangerous one to answer, but they knew he was not afraid of consequences.

Perhaps Jesus was the only one who could always see through the insincerity of would-be flatterers. Spurgeon declared that we are all pervious to flattery; we all like the soothing cordial, only it must not be labeled flattery, he says, for we have a righteous abhorrence of flattery if it be so called; call it by any other name, and we drink it in.

Then came the question his enemies wished him to answer: "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? Shall we give, or shall we not give?" Cæsar was the title given to all Roman emperors; the reigning emperor at this time was Tiberius. The tribute was the yearly tax levied on individuals by the Roman Government. Whatever answer Jesus might give would arouse hostility to himself, the questioners thought: for if he said that it was lawful to give tribute, the people would condemn him; and if he said that it was not lawful, he could be reported to Pilate as a rebel.

Jesus perceived their hypocrisy. He knew that under their posing as admirers of fearless straightforwardness was a plot to bring about his death, and he asked, "Why make ye trial of me?"

"Hypocrisy is at once a spiritual and an intellectual vice. It was a disbelief of the greatness of Christ which made it possible for them to dream of imposing upon him. It was a pride in themselves which could not look into the vastness of truth" (Phillips Brooks).

"Bring me a denarius, that I may see it," Jesus commanded. Strict Jews would not carry a denarius, for they held that the emperor's image upon it savored of idolatry, but one was easily obtainable from the money changers. When it was brought to him Jesus asked, "Whose is the image and superscription?" "Cæsar's," was the answer. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," then said Jesus. *Render* means *give back;* the coin came from Cæsar and they owed him something in return; the right of coinage involved the right of taxation.

"The very idea of the power and right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government" (George Washington).

And then Jesus quickly added, "And unto God the things that are God's." While discharging the duties imposed upon them by human conditions, men must never lose sight of the duties imposed upon them by their relationship to God.

And they marveled greatly at him, at the ease with which he gave an answer that was irrefutable and at the same time evaded the difficult position into which they had thought to put him, and at the way in which he turned the question away from the realm of politics into that of religion.

II. PAUL TEACHES THE DUTY OF OBEYING CIVIL AUTHORITY, Romans 13.1-7. Paul wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth, it is believed, shortly before he started on what proved to be his last journey to Jerusalem, 57 A. D. The Jews of Rome were notoriously bad subjects. "Many of them held, on the ground of Dt. 17.15, that to acknowledge a Gentile ruler was itself sinful; and the spirit which prompted Pharisees to ask, Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? had, no doubt, its representatives in Rome also. As believers in the Messiah, 'in another king, one Jesus' (Acts 17.7), even Christians of Gentile origin may have been open to the impulse of this same spirit; and unbalanced minds, then as in all ages, might be disposed to find in the loyalty which was due to Christ alone, an emancipation from all subjection to inferior powers."

Paul counseled the Christians at Rome to obey the higher powers—those in authority, the civil rulers—and then he laid down the principle that the fact of the authority's being established argues that it was ordained of God. Therefore he who defies the power is defying what has been instituted by God, and shall be judged accordingly.

"Civil government has its source in God, and all constituted power is appointed and ordained by him. The cruel abuses in governments are no necessary part of them, and do not invalidate their divine character any more than the abuses of marriage rob it of its sacredness. Any government is preferable to anarchy, just as poorly enforced marriage laws are better than none. Man abuses all God's gifts" (James Stifler).

Rulers are divinely ordained for the punishing of wrong-doers and the rewarding of well-doers. Only those who do evil need fear the authorities. To be free from the fear of the powers that be, do good. The Roman Empire at this time maintained law and order, protected life and property, and was, as Paul, himself a Roman citizen, believed, on the whole a beneficent power. The inference is, of course, that when rulers are a terror to good works, when their laws violate divine laws, then it is the Christian's duty to disobey them. Recall Blackstone's statement that "Any law that contravenes the Word of God is no law at all."

To the evil-doer, rulers are the agents of God, appointed for his punishment. Therefore render obedience, not only from fear, but because obedience is right. For the ruler does not bear the sword in vain: "This refers to the sword by which criminals were executed, which was on certain occasions borne before the magistrate as a symbol of his authority to inflict punishment."

You *must* be in subjection, Paul continues, not only because of the wrath of God

that follows disobedience, but because of your own conscience which recognizes the right of the authority and the need of freely submitting to it.

For this cause, that is, for conscience' sake, you pay tribute as well as obedience, for rulers are ministers of God's service, persevering faithfully in their official duties. "It seems to have been a matter of principle in the Christian church to pay taxes without question or complaint, probably in obedience to the command of Christ." Next, Paul gives the general principle that all obligations must be met: Render to all their dues: tribute (taxes paid by subject people) to whom tribute is due; custom (ordinary taxes for the support of the government) to whom custom is due; fear (perfect obedience) to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

"There are men who think they are honest and upright, who would escape, if possible, the payment of their share of the expenses of the city, or of the State, in the payment for sidewalks, streets, or the protection of the police—they would not pay what is their due" (Russell Connell).

III. GOOD CITIZENSHIP, 1 Peter 2.13-16. Peter wrote his First Epistle to the Christians in the leading cities of Asia Minor. It is generally believed that he wrote from Rome about the end of 63 or the beginning of 64 A. D. It is a letter of advice and a message of hope. In our selected passage he is speaking about the Christian's obligation to obey rightful authority. "Be subject to every ordinance of man—every human law established by man for man's welfare." And the reason which Peter gives for this direction is "for the Lord's sake." "Because Jesus said, 'Render what is Cæsar's to Cæsar,' or, generally, because God is the source of all duly-constituted authority; or because your loyalty redounds to the credit of your Master in heaven." "Whether," Peter explains, "to the king as supreme (the Roman emperor); or unto governors (of Roman provinces), as sent by the king for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well." "This implies that the governors are sent by God acting through the emperor. The ruler executes God's vengeance (Rom. 12.19), and voices God's approval (Ps. 22.25)" (Expositor's Greek Testament). "The sovereignty is only hallowed when it works to hallowed ends" (J. H. Jowett).

Whose Is the Image and Superscription? Titian

"Loyalty to rulers is to me an essential branch of religion" (John Wesley).

"For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." "Writing in all probability from the Roman church, Peter urges submission to Nero and the provincial governors because ignorant and foolish men were beginning to misrepresent the Christian church as a kind of Internationalist or Socialist conspiracy" (A. J. Mason).

"As free, and not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bond-servants of God." "The Christian took up a position of complete independence and professed himself in a certain sense to be above the laws, by virtue of being a member of Christ's Kingdom. This position the heathen state resented and looked on

the Christian church as a dangerous organization. Here Peter both insists upon and defines that independent position" (A. J. Mason).

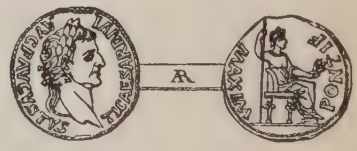
Christians are free and therefore must submit to authority. Liberty is not the antithesis of law. No freedom should become license. Man is responsible for his use of freedom.

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Whose is this image and superscription? Mark 12.16. Throughout the Roman Empire Cæsar claimed and received divine honors, save in Palestine alone. Caligula was the only Cæsar who attempted to force the Jews to worship his image. As Dr. Geikie tells us in New Testament Hours: "It was reckoned enough that two lambs and an ox were offered twice a day in the temple 'for Cæsar and the Roman people'; whether at the cost of the emperor or of the sanctuary is uncertain. On extraordinary occasions, moreover, the Jewish authorities expressed their loyalty by special sacrifices for the emperor. Next to the worship of the Cæsar, his effigy on the coins and military standards was abhorrent to the Jews, and care was taken not to offend their prejudices on these points. It was impossible, however, to avoid the circulation of Roman denarii in Judea bearing the imperial 'image and superscription,' for no gold or silver money was coined in Palestine. On locally coined copper money, only the name of Cæsar and innocent emblems were to be seen."

A Jewish Coin

Our illustration of a denarius shows the image, the head, of Tiberius encircled by a laurel wreath, and bearing the superscription (in Latin), Tiberius Cæsar the son of the deified Augustus himself Augustus.



A Roman Coin

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

You are engaged in the business of making statesmen. You are training the future citizens who will take their part in directing municipal and national affairs. If you are embuing them with worthy ideals, if you are leading them to order their lives in harmony with the law of love, then you are doing "your bit" toward establishing a good government wherein righteousness shall always reign.

"We are making a mistake," declared James J. Hill, "to train our young people in all lines of knowledge and to give them the equipment of the college and university for undertaking the big tasks of life, without making sure also that those fundamental principles of right and wrong as taught in the Bible have become part of their equipment. There is a control of forces and motives which is essential to the management of the vast affairs of our nation which comes only through an educated conscience."

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

MAKING EFFECTIVE THE WILL OF THE COMMUNITY

Beginning the Lesson

"Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," said Jesus. The Jews were accepting the services of Cæsar's government; for these services they must render an equivalent. Jesus never taught contempt for the established government. He ever taught respect to established law.

Had his questioners known of the conversation between Jesus and Peter on the subject of taxation, they would not have thought to ensnare him by propounding their political query. Jesus put this question to Peter: "What thinkest thou, Simon; the kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute; from their sons or from strangers?" "From strangers," replied Peter. Then Jesus said, "Therefore the sons are free—but, lest we cause them to stumble, go and secure the shekel and give unto them for me and thee."

Rome collected the tribute, constructed highways, made the laws. Jesus' answer said that Rome's subjects must pay the tribute, and obey the law even as they made use of the highways. Pythagoras made so great an impression that all argument

was ended among his disciples when any one was able to say *autos epsa*—The master himself said it. And so the disciples of Christ may say as regards the keeping of the fundamental law of our land—the Constitution—that all argument should cease, for the Master himself is our authority that law should be obeyed. Government exists for the individual, and the individual must subordinate himself to the government. The wilful selfishness of a few cannot prevail against it.

The Prohibition Law Is the Will of the Community

It is charged that the Eighteenth Amendment was "put over" by trickery by the Anti-Saloon League; that it was forced on the country unfairly while our soldiers and sailors were absent and that they would have opposed it. What are the facts?

The Amendment was initiated and submitted and ratified in the same manner as all of the other eighteen Amendments to the Constitution.

It was presented first to the Sixty-fifth Congress in 1913, long before we were in the war, but failed to receive the requisite two-thirds majority.

It was the leading issue in the Congressional Campaign of 1916, when all voters who subsequently were in the service expressed their convictions. The Congress then elected was overwhelmingly "dry," as were most of the legislatures elected for from two to four years. The Amendment was submitted to the States by a vote of sixty-five to twenty in the Senate and two hundred and eighty-two to one hundred and twenty-eight in the House.

It was ratified by forty-six of the States by majorities of eighty-six per cent of the Senators and eighty per cent of the lower house.—Samuel Wilson.

No Class Is Exempt from the Law

We have many classes in the United States. We have no classes that are exempt from the laws of the United States. We have many sections in our common country. But the flag flies over all alike, the laws of the country extend to all alike. We have many laws that we do not all or always like, but we have no classes that are privileged to choose whether they will regulate their obedience by their tastes or by their skill in defiance. Liberty under law is matched by the fundamental principle of equality before the law. That way our life as a nation lies.—William F. McDowell, in Law versus Lawlessness.

Law and Morality

There are those who talk as though they thought the purpose of the laws was to make people good. They keep telling us that you cannot make people good by legislation—as if anyone thought you could. It ought to be evident to everybody that law cannot make people good, just as it cannot make them bad. It can only bring to light what they already are.

Civil law really has nothing to do with morality except in the general sense that when law and order prevail it may be easier to live up to higher moral standards than it would be in a condition of anarchy. The law does not forbid such acts as theft or murder because they are immoral, but because they attack the right to own property and the right to live, without which there can be no substantial social order. Theft and murder and similar crimes are prejudicial to the interests of the community. It happens that these acts are also under most circumstances immoral, because they are violations of the law of God.

The Prohibition Amendment is no exception to this general principle. It was not passed because it is wrong to drink wine or beer or whiskey; but because the majority of the states had found that such drinking resulted in deep-seated social evils and that the saloon had become a political menace and a cancer in the life of the community. It was not the aim of such legislation to make people good, but to make society more healthy and sane. The fact that many children are feeble-minded because of prenatal alcoholism in their parents, and that the number of feeble-minded children in this country is increasing at an alarming rate, was thought to be sufficient justification for uprooting the whole nefarious traffic.

We are under moral obligations to obey the law. This is a fundamental Christian principle. "The powers that be are ordained of God." "Wherefore we must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake."—Condensed from an Editorial in American Church Monthly.

Who Are Making Ineffective the Will of the Community

1. Men who make liquor and secure illegally large amounts of money regardless of harm to property, life, and morals. These are worse than profiteers in the war.

2. Men who play politics and seek preferment and a share in the spoils of the liquor ring, which they offer freely. These are worse than ordinary bootleggers.

3. Men and women who put their own selfish indulgence and appetite before the welfare of their nation, the home, or the youth of our land. These are represented by the so-called Personal Liberty group.

4. Men and women who dread to come out and stand for an unpopular cause, and who fear the accusation of narrowness more than they fear sin.

5. Pagans who never consider right or wrong, do not discriminate, are unmoral and too shallow to comprehend danger. This type is often found in so-called fashionable society.

6. The underworld. Turn over a stone and burrowing in the dirt and dark are creeping, crawling things. The criminal and desperate classes are hidden away, battening on the traffic for which some respectable people are contending.

7. A few conscientious men and women who have been misled by the immense amount of clever propaganda, and who only need to be informed to change their present attitude to one of loyalty.

8. A very small proportion of young people, the would-be smart-set, who exhibit those signs of adolescence in defying law which would be amusing if it were not so perilous. This is the hip-pocket group. Unfortunately these people are not always young in years, but come under the class which Miss Ida Tarbell has characterized as the ungrown-up grown-ups.—Mrs. Henry W. Peabody, in the Preface of Save America.

Suggestions for Making the Law Effective

1. Coöperate with the present organizations in making their efforts more effective.

2. Discover the best community organizations which may be enlisted to make Law Enforcement and Citizenship a larger part of their regular programs.

3. Encourage the organization of a Citizenship Committee composed of the ablest men and women of the locality, which shall make this its specific task.

4. Form the acquaintance of the Federal, State and Municipal Enforcement officers and assure them of real sympathetic interest in their duties.

5. Encourage all kinds of public speakers, preachers and lecturers to make this topic one of frequent emphasis.

6. Encourage schools, colleges and universities to magnify the principles of temperance and good government to the fullest degree among all students.

7. Secure the facts about the beneficent results of Prohibition and give them wide publicity.—The Citizenship Conference, Washington.

The Woman's Responsibility as Regards Law Enforcement

That the law is not enforced in certain sections is no reflection on the law, but reflects seriously on a type of citizen too unintelligent, apathetic, selfish, or disloyal, to right the wrong. Women who shirk responsibility are equally guilty with men who encourage law breaking.

Women are the natural law enforcers. Who enforced the law in our family? Father does very well as a law-giver, but if Mother fails in law enforcement or deals largely in suspended sentences, government breaks down. Our Democracy will rise no higher than our home. The home and school must train the future citizen in law observances.—Mrs. Henry W. Peabody, Chairman Woman's National Committee for Law Enforcement.

The Young Girl's Opportunity as Regards Law Enforcement

In answer to the assertion that Prohibition creates a contempt for law, Professor Henry W. Farnam, of Yale University, says: "I deny the statement. It does not create lawlessness, it merely reveals it. Let me illustrate my meaning by an example. I once had a friend who seemed to be the picture of health. He was ruddy, athletic and apparently able to do anything. But one day as he was walking up a moderately steep hill he suddenly felt distressed. He was obliged to go home, and his physician diagnosed a disease of the heart from which he died in a few years. The hill did not create heart disease, but it revealed it. It showed that even the moderate exertion involved was too much for a heart that was impaired. The Volstead Act has, I regret to say, revealed a lawless spirit in quarters where it was not suspected."

What can we do to help? Dr. John Timothy Stone recently told of one girl in Chicago who by refusing to have anything to do with young men with the smell of

liquor upon them, had set a new moral standard among the social class in the society in which she moved. We can cease to be sympathetic with unfair criticism. We can beware of propaganda which is paid for by the liquor interests. We can also be good Americans and reverence the law.—Hugh T. Kerr, in The Westminster Teacher.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Is President Coolidge right in declaring that free government has no greater menace than disrespect for authority and continued violation of law?

2. Do you agree with Bishop Lawrence that no man who breaks the law in order to have a drink can complain if a brick goes through his window some riotous evening?

3. Is Dr. Parks Cadman right in declaring that the extermination of the drink evil will be brought about primarily by moral suasion, based upon the evidence of science and of human experience that intoxicants are unnecessary and harmful?

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. At the time that Isaiah wrote the prophecy of our lesson, what war was imminent? 2. Why was Isaiah so optimistic for the future? 3. On what does Isaiah base his dreams of a warless world? 4. What was Tennyson's vision of universal peace? 5. Has our country started to play its part in international affairs to which her destiny calls her? 6. How can world peace and international good will be best advanced in the coming year? 8. Are existing international arrangements for the promotion of peace adequate to maintain it?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

OBEYING THE LAW

Beginning the Lesson

We have a proverb about sailing, or being, between Scylla and Charybdis, which comes from the classic fable about these two monsters. Do you know what the proverb means? To be between dangers or difficulties from opposite sides. In the fable Scylla was a sea-monster with twelve feet, with six heads, each of which contained three rows of sharp teeth, and with a voice like the yelp of a dog. She dwelt in a cave by the sea, whence she thrust out her heads to snatch seamen from passing ships. Opposite her was Charybdis, another sea-monster, who thrice a day swallowed down the waters of the sea and thrice threw them up again. In attempting to avoid one monster, mariners were in danger of losing their life by the other.

Our lesson text shows us how skillfully Jesus steered his course one day between the Scylla of popular hatred and the Charybdis of Roman retribution; what is the story? Follow with Explanations and Comments.

A Young Man Who Disobeyed the Law

An interesting discussion on the Prohibition Law was given in The Atlantic a few years ago. At a friendly company gathered around the dinner table, the hostess said:

"As my son's mother, I am very happy to know that he doesn't drink or even feel any temptation to drink. One hears so many hateful stories about the secret drinking of mere boys and girls, at school and at their parties, treating one another in their cars by the roadside,—and the consequences of it—that it's odious, just odious."

A little later she begins to wonder why her son and daughter do not return from their evening party. She goes to the window to see if they may be coming, and instantly exclaims:

"Oh! Oh! Oh! How dreadful! Thank God! Oh, thank God it's not the children!"

"Of course not!" her husband said, soothingly; "what was it? Tell us about it."

"Oh, there's been a dreadful accident," she answered. "That poor little boy—oh, that poor little boy! They were driving like mad—to the hospital, I suppose. I saw two policemen standing on the running board of an open car coming up the street, and another sitting on the front seat by the driver. Then, for just an instant, as it flashed into the bright light under the windows, I could see that the policeman in front was holding in his arms a little boy—seven or eight years old—with his head, face upward, hanging over the edge of the car—bright red with

blood—absolutely one bright red disc of blood. Oh, it was horrible! You have no idea how horrible! And then, as it went past, I could see that there was a woman crumpled over in the rear seat, and an old man trying to hold her up."

"Forgive me for making such a fuss about it," she said a few minutes later. "I'm all right now. I suppose it's horrid to be so selfish—but, oh, aren't you glad it wasn't the children!"

Later on she said: "It's half-past one, and there's the telephone. See who it is, quickly. But nothing could have happened to them—my son is such a careful driver."

Her husband listened at the telephone for nearly five minutes, and then said to his wife and the others:

"Oliver has been arrested for speeding. I'll have to go and bail him out. They are letting Dorothy come home."

When Dorothy arrived she was met at the door by one of the guests. "You are leaving town tonight?" she asked, and receiving an affirmative answer, she handed him a small, light, oblong parcel wrapped in a man's handkerchief and thrust it into his hands as she whispered with singular intensity: "Take it with you, please. Take it away and hide it—pitch it where no one will ever find it!"

On the way to the station house the father told the whole of the story to the friend who accompanied him. His son had been arrested on a charge of manslaughter and driving a car while drunk. He had lost control of his car and hit some people, a woman and a little boy, he thought, just a few blocks from home.

Thomas A. Edison's Advice on Avoiding the Transgression of the Law

I have never had time, not even five minutes, to be tempted to do anything against the moral law, the civil law, or any law whatever. If I were to hazard a guess as to what young people should do to avoid temptation, it would be to get a job and work at it so hard that temptation would not exist for them.

Abraham Lincoln's Counsel

Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his posterity, swear never to violate in the least particular the laws of the country, and never to tolerate their violation by others.

The Ephebic Oath

When an Athenian youth attained the age that admitted him to the duties of citizenship, he took the Ephebic Oath. The mayor of New York City repeated its pledges to the graduating class of the College of the City of New York one June, and the class held a special meeting a few days afterwards and all subscribed to them as their program for themselves as citizens. Here they are, and you will see that all the youth of our land ought to hold to the same promises:

"We will never bring disgrace to this our city by any act of dishonesty or cowardice, nor ever desert our suffering comrades in the ranks.

"We will fight for the ideals and the sacred things of the city, both alone and with many.

"We will serve and obey the city's laws, and do our best to incite a like respect and reverence in those above us who are prone to annul and set them at nought.

"We will strive unceasingly to quicken the public's sense of civic duty; that thus, in all these ways, we may transmit this city, not only not less, but greater, better, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."

Sentence Sermons

No one can undermine respect for law without being to that extent an enemy to orderly government.—Lincoln.

Let reverence for law become the political religion of the nation.—Abraham Lincoln.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Tell Isaiah's vision. 2. What did Paul say about the brotherhood of man? 3. What are the evils of war? 4. Read Longfellow's poem, The Arsenal at Springfield, and be ready to tell what its lesson is about war. 5. How can peace be attained in a family group? 6. In a neighborhood? 7. In a nation? 8. In the world? 9. What effect upon war will mutual understanding among nations have? 10. What are some of the things which in your opinion will hasten universal peace?

LESSON VI—NOVEMBER 10

WORLD PEACE THROUGH MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

GOLDEN TEXT: They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11.9

LESSON Isaiah 2.2-4; 11.6-10; 19.23-25; Acts 17.22-28; Ephesians 4.4-6, 13-19; John 4.20, 21 DEVOTIONAL READING Psalm 98.1-9

ISAIAH 2.2 And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. 4 And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

ACTS 17.22 And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, and said,

Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are very religious. 23 For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you. 24 The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: 28 for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said,

For we are also his offspring.

JOHN 4.20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. ISAIAH'S PROPHECY OF UNIVERSAL PEACE, Isaiah 2.2-4. In the midst of foes within and foes without, at a time when the fear was overwhelming that Assyria would capture Judah, the prophet Isaiah had his vision of a time of universal peace. "It shall come to pass in the latter days"—thus his prophecy begins. The expression "the latter days" has the general meaning of "future time." In the far-distant time, Mount Moriah, on which the temple was built (the mountain of Jehovah's house), which stands here for Jerusalem, "shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills." "Interpret the words figuratively as meaning that the fame of Jehovah will become so great that it will eclipse that of all other deities. The metaphor may be based upon an ancient belief that there was a mountain reaching from earth to heaven, on whose summit the gods dwell" (Carl Eiselen). "And all nations shall flow into it": the time will come when other nations will acknowledge the supremacy of Israel and will say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob," the seat of God's universal dominion; "and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."

"Jerusalem, Isaiah tells us, shall be so lifted up as to become literally the light of the world, the true source of law and teaching. Well, history has fulfilled this prophecy, though not possibly as Isaiah anticipated. The actual Jerusalem is a little grey city, much scarred by millenniums of fighting in the uplands of Palestine; but, none the less, directly and indirectly, whatever our Christian world has of faith or vision today has come from that city and from those who have walked its streets. Truly in this sense the mountain of the Lord's house has been exalted above the hills" (Gaius Glenn Atkins).

God's law will dominate the world. The result of God's universal supremacy will be that he will arbitrate among the great nations. "As now all difficult cases in Israelite litigation are brought to the priests as the court of last resort and to Jehovah as the Supreme Judge, so in the Messianic age the nations of the world

will submit their differences to Jehovah, accepting without question his righteous decision."

"The great world's heart is aching, aching fiercely in the night,
And God alone can heal it, and God alone give light;
And the men to bear that message, and to speak the living word,
Are you and I, my brothers, and the millions that have heard."
—(Frederick George Scott).

Therefore they shall beat their swords into plow-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks, for in that glorious future nations shall not lift up sword against nations, neither shall they learn war any more. The plow-share was used for stirring up the soil, but it was only a small piece of iron somewhat resembling a sword in shape, and could well have been made out of a sword.

"Then I dipped into the future far as human eye could see;
Saw the vision of the world and all the wonder that would be . . .
The war drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.—(Tennyson).

II. PAUL'S DECLARATION OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF ALL MANKIND, Acts 17.22-28. When hostile Jews from Thessalonica went to Berœa and stirred up trouble for Paul, the brethren sent him to the sea and accompanied him to Athens. By his Berœan escort he sent back word to Silas and Timothy, who had remained behind, to join him at once. While waiting for them, his spirit was greatly stirred as he beheld the city full of idols. He preached in the synagogue to the Jews and proselytes, and also "reasoned" every day in the market-place. Finally he was summoned for an informal hearing before the Areopagus, the Athenian council. "May we know what this new teaching is which is spoken by thee?" the men questioned; "For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean." Standing up in their midst, Paul addressed them.

The Acropolis, Athens, with the Areopagus (market-place) in the Foreground

"Ye men of Athens," he began, using the classical words familiar to us through the writings of Thucydides and Demosthenes, "In all things (wherever I look) I perceive that ye are very religious." And then he explained his remark: "For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found (in addition to altars with dedications to definite gods) also one with the inscription, To an Unknown God." Such altars were erected by men who had experienced some deliverance and were not certain to what deity they owed the favor.

"What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you," Paul declared. The inscription told him of their yearning for a clearer and closer knowledge of the unseen Power which men worshiped dimly and imperfectly.

Paul then proceeded to show how God, far from being unknown, had revealed himself in many ways. He was the Creator, "the God that made the world and all things therein"; he is a Spirit, "being Lord of heaven and earth, he dwelleth not in temples made with hands," as did their gods; he is independent, "he is not served by men's hands, as though he needed anything." Idolaters, it seems, were accustomed to clothe the images of the gods with splendid garments, and to minister to them in various ways.

By service we increase the welfare, the well-being of others; shall we think in any way to increase the well-being of God? The only way in which we can serve him Jesus told us in his parable of the Last Judgment; "In-

asmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." We serve God by serving men.

God is the Giver: "He himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." Then to those Greeks who called all other men barbarians, Paul did not hesitate to affirm that God is the Unifier and Ruler: "He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth."

This is a very broad declaration of the brotherhood of all mankind. The Athenians to whom Paul spoke these words divided the world into Greeks and barbarians, and for the barbarians they had only contempt. The nation to which Paul belonged divided the world into Jews and Gentiles, and great was the Jewish prejudice against Gentiles. Paul believed in the unity of the human race: all are sons of one Father, and brothers of one another.

"Having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation," continued Paul, "that they should seek God, if haply (perhaps) they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us."

"I hold more strongly than ever to this conviction, deepened and strengthened by long experience, of the reality, the nearness, and the personality of God" (Gladstone).

For in him we live and move, and have our being.

"Closer is he than breathing,
Nearer than hands and feet" (Tennyson).

God is the Father, "as certain of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." Thus sang Aratus and Cleanthes in their hymn to Zeus. Aratus, like Paul, was a native of Cilicia; he lived in the third century B.C. Cleanthes lived a generation earlier than Aratus.

III. JESUS' PROPHECY OF UNIVERSAL WORSHIP, John 4.20, 21. On his way to Galilee, one time, Jesus passed through Samaria instead of crossing the Jordan and going up the eastern side of the river as most Jews did in order to avoid the Samaritans. At Jacob's Well, near Sychar, he had his memorable conversation with the woman of Samaria who came there to draw water. He brought home to her her guilty life, and she sought to turn the conversation by pointing to Mount Gerizim and asking Jesus as a prophet to solve the long-standing dispute between the Samaritans and Jews as to the right place in which to worship. "Our fathers," she said, "worshiped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." "It is as if she said, 'If it is religion you mean, your people and mine differ about religion. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain.' "

"Upon the ancient parchment scroll of the Samaritan Pentateuch there is to be read this commandment, added to the other ten: 'Thou shalt build an altar on Mount Gerizim, and there only shalt thou worship.' This is the true likeness of what all churches and sects, unless purified by a high spirit, are tempted to add. 'Thou shalt maintain the exclusive sacredness of this or that place, this or that word, this or that doctrine, this or that party, this or that institute, this or that mode of doing good. Thou shalt worship God thus and thus only" (Dean Stanley).

Jesus then made one of his great pronouncements, one that swept away the bigotry of centuries. The local institutions of the Old Covenant were passing away, for the new and universal one was at hand. Neither there on Mount Gerizim nor yet at Jerusalem alone shall one worship; for God may be worshiped everywhere.

"Peace will come when there is realization that only under the reign of law, based on righteousness and supported by the religious conviction of the brotherhood of man, can there be any hope of a complete and satisfying life. Parchment will fail; the sword will fail; it is only the spiritual nature of man that can be triumphant" (Calvin Coolidge).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Our fathers worshiped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship, Jn. 4.20. Now it came to pass that the Alexandrian Jews and Samaritans disputed about their temples before Ptolemy himself, the Jews saying that, according to the law of Moses, the temple was to be built at Jerusalem; and the Samaritans saying that it was to be built at Gerizim. They desired therefore the king to sit with his friends and hear the debates about these matters, and punish those with death who were baffled. . . . Now when Sabbeus and Theodosius (Samaritans) had given leave to Andronicus (from Jerusalem) to speak first, he began to demonstrate out of the law, and out of the successions of high priests, how they every one in succession from the father had received that dignity and ruled over the temple; and how all the kings of Asia had honored that temple with their donations to and with the most splendid gifts dedicated thereto; but as for that at Gerizim, he made no account of it, and regarded it as if it had never had a being. By this speech, and other arguments, Andronicus persuaded the king to determine that the temple at Jerusalem was built according to the laws of Moses, and to put Sabbeus and Theodosius to death.—Josephus in Antiquities.

Ye say in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship, Jn. 4.20. The Jews believed that all other nations should literally bow themselves down and become disciples of the Jews, and be received by adoption into the Jewish church, so that in the end all the people of the globe should be members of the Jewish economy; and they believed that the temple in Jerusalem would be to all races of men in the world what it was to them. They believed that pilgrimages would always be made to Jerusalem and that the temple-worship would remain to the end of time. —Henry Ward Beecher.

Worshiping the Unknown God
From a Painting in the Congressional Library

The objects of your worship, Acts 17.23. A Roman poet, Petronius, said that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens; and another poet, Pausanius, said that there were more images in Athens than in all the rest of Greece combined. In one street there stood before every house a square pillar, carrying upon it a bust of the god Hermes, whence the street bore the name of the Street of Hermæ. Another street, the Street of the Tripods, was lined with tripods dedicated to the survivors of the Greek national games, and carrying each an inscription to a deity. Every gateway and porch carried an image of its protecting God.

To an unknown God, Acts 17.23. According to Pausanius and Philostratus, there were altars to unknown gods on the way from Phalerum to Athens, at Athens, and at Olympia. The poet Epimenides bade the Athenians cure a plague by erecting altars "to the deity concerned" (the unknown deity who had sent the pestilence) at any spot where a flock of sheep that he had turned loose lay down.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

It was in 1911 that President Taft wrote: "I believe that we have made great strides toward peace within the last decade," and Woodrow Wilson, then Governor of New Jersey, said: "I consider the present agitation for International Arbitration and World Peace a deep-seated and permanent thing, representing the fixed and universal desire of the human heart." Three years later the World War began.

Universal peace will come when the outlook of the people of the world is changed. What diplomacy and councils have failed to achieve can be accomplished through the creation of a new spirit of world-friendship, and through the education of all peoples to a deeper realization of the meaning and obligation of international relationships. Simply to know the peoples of other nations better makes for peace.

The problem of peace is a problem of education. Better than reliance upon the cutting down of armies and navies is reliance upon the education of the coming generation to a recognition of the futility of war and the reality of the brotherhood of men. A new world spirit will grow up with a new generation if the children and young people of all nations are rightly taught. "Give the children a true idea of war in their history books, and the next generation would no more want a war than they would want an earthquake," declares Israel Zangwill. But let them grow up untaught in the real meaning of war, and the world will have to learn over again the lessons of the Great War.

Discuss the heroes of peace rather than of war, the Lindberghs, the Bobby Joneses, and the Helen Willses, all whom we might term ambassadors of good will, as well as men and women who have made greater contributions to world welfare.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

OUR SHARE IN PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

Beginning the Lesson

In his book entitled, The United States of Europe, Victor Hugo wrote this prophecy of peace among Europeans and Americans:

"A day will come when war will appear as absurd, and be as impossible, between Paris and London, between Saint Petersburg and Berlin, between Vienna and Turin, as it would be now between Rouen and Amiens, between Boston and Philadelphia. A day will come when the only battlefield will be the market upon commerce and the mind opening to new ideas. A day will come when bullets and bombshells will be replaced by votes, by the universal suffrage of nations, by the venerable arbitration of a great Sovereign Senate."

And then he questioned: "But, French, English, Germans, Russians, Slavs, Europeans, Americans, what have we to do in order to hasten the advent of that great day?" And he answered: "We must love each other! To love each other is, in this immense labor of pacification, the largest manner of aiding God!"

His prophecy is similar in thought to that of Isaiah. How wonderful Isaiah's prophecy is, is best seen against the background of Israel's early ideals. As Professor McFadyen points out, her natural history began with war; she won her hold upon Canaan by her success in war. "One of her earliest books had battles for its theme—the books of the Wars of Jehovah (Num. 21.14); one of the earliest and greatest of all Hebrew poems is a war-song (the Song of Deborah in Judges 5); and her God Jehovah was a man of war (Ex. 15.3). This prophecy of Isaiah is almost a protest against Israel's early ideals; it is, at any rate, an ideal enormously in advance of those, betokening a far profounder appreciation of the divine mind and heart and purpose, and showing how surely God was directing the education of Israel. Her nobler thinkers believed that the great king of the coming days would be not a man of war, but a prince of peace (Is. 9.6), and they looked forward with eager joy to the time when 'all the armor of the armed men in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood, shall be for burning, for fuel of fire' (Is. 9.5)."

War Is Irrational

How absurd it would be for individuals to revert to war to settle disputes, Dr. Robert E. Speer shows in a striking way:

" 'That bit of farm which you have included in your fences is mine,' says Farmer A. 'No, it is my own,' says Farmer B. So each gets a stick and pounds the other, and Farmer A. being the stronger proves that the just title to the land is with him. Does he? He proves nothing of the sort. He only proves that he was able at that time to beat Farmer B. If we forbid the settlement of disputes between individuals by force, why should we not forbid the settlement of national disputes by force?

"War is always wrong for some one. Two nations can't be fighting together with each of them in the right. For the nation that is in the wrong, the war is certainly

wrong. When both are in the wrong, then surely the strife is wrong. And if by any chance each one is partly right, how can war ever be expected to apportion the result to each? War is wrong because it is irrational. We believe in God and in the righteous government of the world, but we are not entitled on this belief to do wrong, trusting God to bring it out right. He has given us reason for the solution of our problems, and it is not his will that we should attempt to solve them by force."

The Road to Peace

"All men of good will desire peace, but not all are agreed as to the method by which it can be secured," to quote from an editorial in The London Times Literary Supplement. "The old maxim, *Si vis pacem para bellum* (If you wish for peace, prepare for war) has not fallen wholly into discredit; and the old principle of the balance of power, rejected by the Conference of Paris, has emerged again. If wars are to be avoided in the future, it seems that something more will be needed than leagues, conferences, and agreements for the limitation of armaments. The law of good faith, though of extreme importance, is not in itself enough to guarantee international amity. It is possible, and indeed probable, that no such guaranty will ever be found. If it is to be found, it must be sought, not in covenants, but in the closer mutual understanding which may be the outcome of closer knowledge. In short, to find the way of peace we must needs explore, and if possible clear, the jungle of national contradictions and antagonisms which are the causes of war."

The Congregationalist, in commenting upon this editorial, asks how we can "clear the jungle of national contradictions," and suggests that we may, at least, make a beginning by introducing lectures about foreign countries and their problems into our schools and churches, and by celebrating the great days associated with the ideals or achievements identified with world peace.

The Task of Helping People Everywhere to Live together as Brothers

Legend tells of a visit which Elijah and a friend once made to an oriental marketplace. "Is there anyone in this gathering," asks the friend, "who is certain to know immortality?" "The old man in the corner," replies the prophet. Approaching the old man, the friend inquires what he has ever done to merit the reward Elijah foretold for him. "Nothing," is the answer, "unless it be that whenever I saw two who were about to become enemies, I tried to make them friends." Tolstoy meets an old beggar and grieves that he has left his purse at home. "I am sorry, my brother, that I have nothing to give you." "But you called me 'brother,'" says the beggar, "and that was a great gift." Twenty years after he had wronged his brother, Jacob meets Esau and pleads with him to accept a gift at his hands. "Receive my gift," he begs, "forasmuch as I have seen thy face as one seeth the face of God and thou wast pleased with me." Job tries to justify himself to his friends, to God. He tells the story of his life. Never had a needy soul appealed to him in vain. And finally he speaks of his relation to his servant. "Did not he that made me make him?" And then I think of the One Hundred and Thirty-third Psalm. "Behold, how good and how pleasing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

To help people everywhere, people of every land and every group, of every circle, to help them realize that they are brethren, and to assist them to live together as one because they are brethren, this is the high task to which every churchman, everyone who claims to know God, every real American, every decent man and woman will and must give the best that in him lies.—Harry Levi, in Boston Preachers.

Movements for Gaining International Understanding

What do we know of the peoples of foreign lands? International ignorance continues to be one of our devastating handicaps. What, for example, do we here in America know of the peoples of Asia, of China, of Japan? Would we dream of war with Japan if we really knew the Japanese? Would we believe the fantastic tales told of them? Is not our jingoistic credulity the product of our ignorance? What do we know of the people of Persia, of Siberia? What know we of the people of Africa? How much of truth have we of the peoples of Europe? What do we know of the people of Italy, of Spain, of France, of Germany, of Russia? Hardly as much as they know of us. How Europeans, who have never been here, take us to task! If only they knew the truth. Sometimes they visit our shores, certainly not long enough to learn to understand us, and at once they become authoritative critics of our ways and our work. And we are guilty of the same sin.

If we would cure many of our international ills we need to get closer together. Cecil Rhodes was wise when he left a fund to be used for bringing foreign students to England. There, living among the English, they would learn to know England, and, returning home, would become ambassadors of good will. The Guggenheim Fund of three million dollars is to serve the same kind of purpose on a much larger scale. The Junior Red Cross Society has arranged for correspondence between the children of a dozen different lands. Dr. Knudsen, at the head of the educational system of Sweden, is following the same plan with the children in his care. The National Child Welfare Association has issued a pamphlet containing the pictures of children of different lands, dressed in their native costumes, playing native games. Beneath each picture is printed an interesting little poem about the children of the country thus portrayed. The purpose is to let our American children know that everywhere are boys and girls like themselves, as interesting, as attractive as themselves.

"In hearts too young for enmity
There lies the way to make men free;
When children's friendships are world-wide,
New ages will be glorified.
Let child love child, and strife will cease.
Disarm the hearts, for that is peace."

So sings Ethel Blair Jordan.—Harry Levi, in Boston Preachers.

The Power of the Press for Promoting International Understanding

I advocate the realization of the interdependence of the human race and the promotion of mutual understanding and respect for the national ideas and aspirations of nations. In the spirit that prompted Lincoln's address at Gettysburg is still to be found the salvation of the race. The best places to inculcate the supreme virtue of charity and the folly of passing judgment on the basis of half-understood facts are the schools and the press, which are the best and the most influential organs of public education.

Bare facts are often misleading unless the proper interpretation is put upon them, and it is my sincere wish that every great newspaper of the world will make its guiding principle the achievement of world peace and international good will.—Reijiro Wakatsuki, Prime Minister of Japan.

Significance of the Peace Bridge

Conferences may be held and dissolved without leaving much evidence of practical fruits; leagues may be formed and broken; even treaties may be torn up as scraps of paper; but for centuries and ages to come there will span the river which marks the boundary line between the two great and powerful English-speaking nations of the world a monument in steel and stone of the eternal friendship pledged between these nations for their own good and happiness and for the peace of the whole world. This fact was emphasized, on the occasion of the opening of the bridge, by the American representative, Charles G. Dawes, when he said, "This bridge represents a bridge of understanding, because it cements a friendship between the English-speaking peoples founded on common principles in government, of individual liberty under law, and on the instinct of self-preservation, the most deep-seated of mankind." Such principles indeed are more enduring than the stone and steel of which the peace bridge is built. Some great physical catastrophe may destroy the proudest work of man, but the principles on which the friendship of these two nations is founded are as eternal as the heavens.—The New Outlook.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The Church's responsibility for war. See Ye Must Be Born Again, The Christian Century, October 27, 1927.

2. How has international good will been promoted by missions?

3. Should the United States remain outside of the League of Nations?

4. Do you believe with H. G. Wells that "the world is drifting with happy carelessness toward a new catastrophe"?

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. In the Merchant of Venice, what does Shylock the Jew say to Bassanio the

Gentile about eating with him? 2. What great men of other races do you admire? 3. A Chinese questions: "How do you account for the feeling of racial superiority which the Westerners have?" What is your answer? 4. How may children and youths be led to acquire friendly attitudes toward people of other races? 5. Have we a task in regard to the millions of unassimilated immigrants in our midst? 6. How can racial barriers in our country be overcome?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

WORKING FOR WORLD PEACE

Beginning the Lesson

What is Isaiah's prophecy of universal peace? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

The Waste of War

War costs immense sums of money. During the World War the annual cost to Great Britain was hundreds of millions of dollars. Horace Mann was right when he affirmed that if a thousandth part of what has been expended in war and preparing its mighty engines had been devoted to the development of reason and the diffusion of Christian principles nothing would have been known for centuries past of its terrors, its suffering, its impoverishment, and its demoralization, but what was learned from history.

A Great Peacemaker

There was a boy whose father was a fighting admiral, and had won a great reputation in the battles he had fought at sea. You can perhaps imagine what this brave man felt when he heard that his son had joined some people who refused to fight. Of course, he thought he had a coward if not a madman for a son, and at first he would have nothing to do with him. But the son, now grown a man, went on preaching that there was a better way of putting things right than killing people, although he was greatly abused and even put into prison for it. And being in prison was a terrible thing then. He showed that he could face angry crowds and suffer himself, though he would not inflict suffering on others, and at last the father was reconciled to his son, and admitted that he, too, was a hero. That was William Penn, the Quaker.

William Penn was the founder of the great State of Pennsylvania. Charles II of England owed him a great deal of money, and gave him this land in payment. It was inhabited by Indians at the time, and I am sorry to say the white people often thought that these "savages," as they called them, had no right to their own land. They made war on them, and of course the Indians retorted in the same way, and often killed the white people, until both sides got to hate each other very bitterly. But Penn went out without any weapons to the Indians in this country which he now had to govern, and simply said to them that he wanted to be friends, and would always treat them with justice and goodwill. No treaty was written and signed; they just gave their word and trusted each other.

Now, it is a fact that for many years, as long as Penn governed that land and for some time after, although there were murders and fights in the other States between Indians and whites, there were none in Pennsylvania.—Will Reason.

When War Ceased

In the Great War the French and German armies lay opposite each other in northern France, with a little space between where stood a farm house and its surrounding fields. The firing began briskly on both sides, but suddenly ceased. In the yard before the farmhouse there tottered—a baby! It plucked at a yellow dandelion, missed it, clutched again, succeeded, and burst into crowing laughter. And about the baby there descended peace. Who could fire at the risk of even frightening a laughing baby?

Then a German soldier threw down his gun, climbed out of the trench, ran across the field and picked up the baby, carried it over to the French line, and returned to his place. And on both sides broke out a great cheer.

It must have been hard to begin firing again. Not much could have been achieved by either side at that spot that morning.

What a great day of peace that will be when all nations as differences arise see before them the smiling face of the Babe of Bethlehem, the Prince of Peace, at whose coming angels sang Peace on earth, good will among men.

How We Can Work for World Peace Now

"If swords are to be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruninghooks, where must that work begin?" questions Dr. J. H. Jowett. "It must begin in the individual heart. We are all familiar with our own swords; perhaps I had better say, we are all acquainted with one another's swords. There is the sword of ill will. There is the spear of deadly gossip. There is the sword of evil prejudice. There is the spear of petty spite and contempt. Yea, surely there is a sordid armory in the soul. And this has to be converted into a toolhouse of a noble Christian culture before the material armories can be emptied and the sound of war is heard no more."

The Christ of Everywhere

Chile and Argentina were at one time on the verge of war over an old boundary dispute. Both countries were making preparations, but eventually they agreed to let the King of England settle the quarrel. He apportioned to each a part of the disputed territory and this was satisfactory. Then the women of the two nations planned a peace monument, to be made from melted cannon. In 1904 this statue was placed on the summit of the Andes. It is called the Christ of the Andes, and represents Christ holding in one hand a cross and extending a blessing with the other. His figure rests on a globe on which the map of the world is outlined. On a tablet below are these words: "Sooner shall these mountains crumble into dust than shall the people of Argentina and Chile break the peace to which they have pledged themselves at the feet of Christ the Redeemer."

Christ of the Andes

Dr. Henry van Dyke writes this beautiful stanza about The Christ of Everywhere:

"Christ of the Andes," Christ of the Everywhere,
Great Lover of the hills, the open air,
And patient lover of impatient men
Who blindly strive and sin and strive again,
Thou Living Word, larger than any creed,
Thou Love Divine, uttered in human need,—
Oh, teach the world, warring and wandering still,
Thy Way of Peace, the footpath of Good Will!

Sentence Sermons

Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need of arsenals and forts.—Longfellow.

War is the most futile and the most ferocious of human follies.—Secretary Hay.

Let us strive to achieve and cherish among ourselves and with all nations a just and lasting peace.—Abraham Lincoln.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What was Peter taught by his contact with Cornelius? 2. What is the meaning of our text from Galatians? 3. What did Jesus teach by his parable of the Good Samaritan? 4. What races have you heard spoken of with scorn? 5. Is there any excuse for such scorn? 6. How should you treat people whose skin differs from yours?

LESSON VII—NOVEMBER 17

LIVING WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER RACES

GOLDEN TEXT: Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him. Acts 10.34, 35

LESSON Ruth 1.1-18; John 4.5-10; Acts 10.1 to 11.18; Romans 1.14; Galatians 3.28, 29
DEVOTIONAL READING Ephesians 3.14-21

ACTS 10.9 Now on the morrow, as they were on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour: 10 and he became hungry, and desired to eat: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance; 11 and he beholdeth the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth: 12 wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven. 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat. 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean. 15 And a voice came unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common.

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel, 31 and saith, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call unto thee Simon, who is surnamed Peter: he lodgeth in the house of Simon a tanner, by the sea side. 33 Forthwith therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord. 34 And Peter opened his mouth, and said,

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: 35 but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.

GALATIANS 3.28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one *man* in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. RACIAL PREJUDICES MUST BE OVERCOME, Acts 10.1-15. There was a Roman centurion at Cæsarea, Cornelius by name, a very devout man who feared God and was generous with the poor. One day in a vision he seemed to hear an angel saying to him, "Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God," and bidding him send to Joppa for a man named Peter. At once Cornelius sent two of his servants in search of Peter. Joppa was on the seacoast thirty miles west of Jerusalem.

On the morrow, as the servants were approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the housetop to pray. He was hungry, and while waiting for food to be prepared, he fell into a trance. Webster defines trance as a state in which the soul seems to have passed out of the body into another state of being, or to be wrapt in visions. In his trance Peter beheld a receptacle resembling a great sheet let down from heaven by its four corners, and in it all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things and birds, and he heard a voice bidding him kill and eat. "Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean," Peter exclaimed, horrified. Peter had strictly observed the Levitical law which prescribed what animals could be eaten and how they should be slaughtered.

"When by a marvelous vision of the plan of redemption that was to include the whole world, Peter was shown his task; he offered as excuse for deep-seated racial prejudice that he never had done such a thing before. That time-worn, battered excuse has been presented from that hour to this. The members of the 'Never Have Club' are many. Peter thought better of it and said wisely, 'What was I that I could withstand God?' Is it not precisely what we need to see, that, instead of fancying we have said the last word with 'I never have,' we are being disobedient when, bidden to any service needful to humanity, we offer so flimsy an excuse? The effective work of the world might easily be doubled if the 'Never Haves' could only change their motto to 'I Always Do'" (Zion's Herald).

Then to his great astonishment Peter heard the voice say, "What God hath

cleansed, make not thou common." The lesson was made impressive by the fact that this receptacle with its contents was let down three times and then taken up. All had come from God, and what God had made and given was good in his sight. Apart from the symbolical meaning of the vision, it was important for Peter and all the church leaders to recognize the fact that the distinction of meats held by the Jews in the past must now be given up, in order that Jews and Gentiles might eat together, associating on terms of equality.

"Is Peter's vision on the housetop—sudden, astonishing, bewildering—necessarily more divine than those daily compunctions and hints, and dissatisfactions, and hauntings of something wrong in his attitude toward men, with which Peter might have been visited every day for weeks past?"

II. GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS, Acts 10.17-35. While Peter was pondering the meaning of the vision, the messengers sent by Cornelius arrived. Peter called them in and lodged them over night, putting at once into practice his understanding of the vision, for they were men of another race, whom once he would have called unclean. The day following, Peter went with the messengers to the home of Cornelius. He took the precaution to take with him six brethren, for he felt that he was doing a venturesome thing and he wanted witnesses. Cæsarea was on the seacoast thirty miles north of Joppa. On reaching there, he found Cornelius and many Gentile kinsmen and friends of the latter awaiting him. Cornelius told about the vision which had led him to send for the apostle, and added, "Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord."

"And Peter opened his mouth and said" (these words indicate the solemnity of the occasion and the weightiness of Peter's message): "God has no favorites, but he who reverences him and lives a good life in any nation is welcomed by him" (Moffatt's translation).

"Strangely enough, the problem of the Jew today is not his prejudice against the rest of the world. It is the rest of the world's prejudice against him. The bigotry of men who called themselves Christians in dealing with Jews is one of the sad, dark pages of human history. Many Christians today need to see the vision of the descending sheet and to give to modern Jews the benefit of Peter's great announcement of democracy, 'God is no respecter of persons.'"

III. ALL ARE ONE IN CHRIST JESUS, Galatians 3.28, 29. The Galatians, as The Expositor's Greek Testament reminds us, were themselves a signal instance of the power of the gospel to make men one in Christ, for their churches were gathered out of the most diverse elements: Jew and Gentile, slave and freeman, male and female, all had contributed to their composition. In his letter to them Paul reminds them of their unity in Christ. There can be no distinctions among Christians—of whatever race—whether Jew or Greek—whatever social position—whether bond or free, and which their sex. If aliens from the people of God yet if Christ's, then they were heirs according to promise.

Paul's enemies had contended that there must be "Jew and Greek." "They fenced off the Jewish preserve from uncircumcised intruders. Gentiles must adopt their ritual, or they must remain a lower caste, outside the privileged circle of the covenant —heirs of Abraham. But Paul declares that in Christ a new, universal humanity comes into existence, formed of men who by faith are grafted into him. Partakers of Christ, Gentiles also are of the seed of Abraham. Christ has secured for mankind and keeps in trust its glorious heritage. In him we hold in fee the ages past and to come. The sons of God are heirs of the universe."

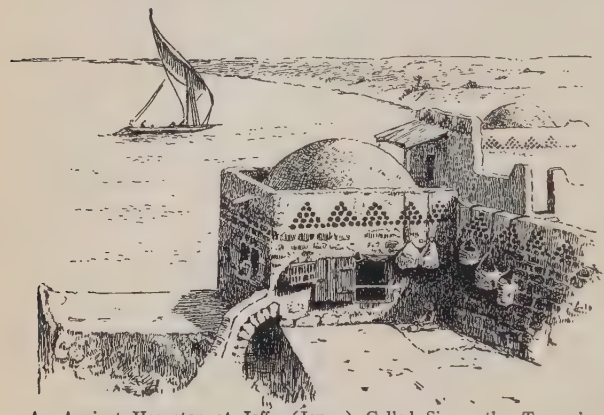
"The practice of the Church has fallen far below the doctrine of Christ and his apostles. In this respect Mohammedans and Buddhists might teach Christian congregations a lesson of fraternity. The arrangements of our public worship seem often designed expressly to emphasize social distinctions, and to remind the poor man of his inequality. What matters it whether my brother wears velvet or fustian, if Christ be with him? The humbleness of his birth or occupation, the uncouthness of his speech, cannot separate him, nor can the absence of these peculiarities separate his neighbor from the love of God in Christ Jesus" (G. G. Findlay).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, Acts 10.9. Many were the activities carried on upon the housetop; there corn was dried, linen was hung up, exercise was taken, booths were erected during the Feast of Tabernacles, and there in hot weather sleep was sought. It was especially the place for prayer and meditation, at evening and in the morning and at noontide.

"One is continually reminded of the custom of praying on the housetop when one comes into this country," says W. E. Curtis, in Today in Syria, "for when the Muezzin appears in the balcony of the minaret to call the hour of prayer, thousands of the faithful climb to their housetops, turn their faces toward Mecca, and go through the gymnastic performance which accompanies Mohammedan worship."

I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean, Acts 10.14. The Romans called the Jews "Basket-carriers," because when traveling they had a basket, or wallet, slung from their shoulders in which they carried food. They did this to avoid eating certain kinds of food which were forbidden by their laws. Nor could they eat with a Gentile, for that would make them "unclean." "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you," says Shylock to Bassanio in one of Shakespeare's plays, and this has always been the spirit of strict Jews. A strict Jew today in our own country will not use soap in washing dishes because the fat of pigs has been used in making it, and for him a dish which has been washed by a Gentile must be rewashed by a Jew before it can be used.



An Ancient Housetop at Jaffa (Joppa) Called Simon the Tanner's

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

While Peter was pondering the meaning of the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men seek thee." While he was meditating about abstract truth, the concrete facts of life were presented to him. Through these messengers he was given an immediate opportunity of putting into practice the lesson learned. The seeing of an abstract truth is only half: if the complementary half be not joined with it, it becomes even less than half. The true sequence is—ideal, impulse, action. Action is essential to make the lofty ideal an integral part of character. We grow wiser by receiving higher ideals, but unless we try to execute them we do not grow better.

It is natural for a little child to attempt at once to put his good impulses into action. The aim of all child-training should be to encourage this natural tendency. To hold forth lofty visions of the good and the true to children of larger growth is easy; to arouse their good impulses is comparatively easy; to lead those impulses into fruition in action requires much thought and skill on the leader's part. Be on the lookout to point out opportunities for putting visions into practice, and teach your pupils to recognize them when they come.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

LIVING WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER RACES

Beginning the Lesson

The first Christian leaders were Jews and full of Jewish prejudices; they had been brought up to believe that it was with them alone that God had covenanted,

and that the only way in which Gentiles could share their privileges and enter into covenant relationship with God was by being circumcised and becoming Jewish proselytes. They still held these ideas at the time of the events of our lesson. To the Jews of this time the Kingdom of God meant, in the expressive words of Glenn Frank, a religious monopoly with Judaism as the only stockholder.

They had not grasped the thought that Christ had died for all and that the new wine of Christianity could not be kept in the old bottles of Judaism. It was necessary that these Jewish leaders at Jerusalem should throw over their prejudices, and be converted to a larger vision and freer faith. Last week we saw how Peter put away his fear; today we see him putting away his prejudices.

The Present Jewish Point of View

It seems passing strange that there could be anything in the nature of a Jewish question, or that the comparatively small percentages we almost everywhere form in the various populations should be sufficient to upset the equanimity of the vastly preponderating numbers of our neighbors of other races and creeds. It is surprising, indeed, that so much should be heard of Jews at all, when the world over we form no more than one per cent of the earth's total population.—The Jewish Chronicle.

Racial Levels

The Samaritan woman, perceiving that Jesus was of the Jewish race, attributed to him the standard Jewish belief that men ought to worship in Jerusalem. It was an utterly superficial judgment. Jesus was a Jew, but not in the sense that he shared all opinions with his compatriots. The Samaritan woman made a serious mistake. Even so, to apply a racial label to any man without considering whether or not he deserves it is a great injustice. And this is truth both by way of commendation or blame. For each individual is not only a representative of his race or nation. He may be, first of all, a man.—Henry van Dyke.

What the Bible Tells about Race Relations

We open the Book. "In the beginning God"; the creation of the world; its peopling with the lower orders of life; and then "God created man in his own image, . . . and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Gen. 1.27 and 2.7.

Who can fail to see the implication? Made in the image of God, like him in the power to know and to choose between good and evil, inbreathed by God's own immortal spirit, humanity is something infinitely valuable and sacred. I must respect every man, not necessarily because of what he seems to be, but because of his innate divinity, his potential God-likeness, his infinite possibilities.

"Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?" Mal. 2.10.

As children of one heavenly Father, I must think of all men as brothers. No, not in terms of sentiment and gush, but in understanding, in sympathy, in good will and helpfulness. Many of them I may not admire, some I may even dislike, but just the same I must think of them with kindly interest and an honest desire to do them good, not ill.

"God . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Acts 17.24 and 26.

How shall we account, then, for the striking differences between races? For example, what has made some of them light in color and others dark? Climate, without doubt. One can easily see its effect in a single summer's tan. Imagine the process going on for ages and you can readily understand the result. But doesn't the Bible say God cursed Ham and turned him black? No, it does not. It says nothing about God cursing anybody, and nothing about anybody being turned black. Read the story for yourself in Gen. 9.

"God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean." Acts 10.28.

Since all are the children of God, I must not think contemptuously of any nor flatter myself with any feeling of innate superiority. I may have had better advantages; I may know more and have more; I may even be more capable than others; all this I may see quite clearly; but I may not therefore count myself inherently better than any other of God's children. I am not the judge of any man or race. To their own Father alone men stand or fall. (Rom. 14.4.)

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Mark 12.31. If God so loved us we

ought also to love one another." 1 John 4.11. "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." 1 John 3.18.

"Impossible," you say? "There are some people we just can't love!" Not if we understand what Jesus meant by love. He was talking of something very different from what we usually call by that term—something very much finer and more unselfish. He meant a deep human sympathy that always seeks to understand and a genuine interest and good will that are always anxious to help. In that sense it is not only possible but easy for one of Christ-like spirit to love even the most unlovely. And love like that "is the fulfilling of the law."—Robert B. Eleazer, in The Christian Advocate.

The Contribution of Other Racial Groups

When we talk of greater excellence let us not forget that there are various kinds of excellence. The white race apparently excels, at least at present, in guiding other people to its wealth, in the conquest of nature by science, in developing the material resources of the earth. But are there not qualities also evidenced by us which are more characteristic of other people than of a militarized, mechanized, materialistic, assertive West? How about humility, serenity of spirit, gentleness, spiritual insight? Dare we say that we surpass in these? What people excel the Chinese in patience or in loyalty in personal relationships? Who would not acknowledge an almost matchless love of beauty and courtesy in Japan? What race has shown more of sunny cheerfulness, even in hardship, than the African? Who excels the Latin-American in powers of imagination? What country has profounder sense of the reality of the unseen than India?

No race can be named that does not have qualities which merit our respect and which we need to emulate. Surely there is equality among the races in the same sense, at least, that there is equality among the members of the body; all are equally necessary to the richness of life as a whole.—Unknown.

Our Negro Population

Whether we think of the presence of 11,000,000 Negroes in the United States as a problem, a burden, a responsibility, or an opportunity, it is becoming more and more obvious that we must do something about it. There is a historic reason why we should: our Negro Americans have been here as long as most other Americans,—since 1619,—and they came, as Booker Washington used to say, by the "personal invitation" of white men. There is an economic reason: the country cannot afford to let any tenth of its population stagnate in ignorance, inefficiency, and degradation. There is moral reason: no clearer case of *"Noblesse oblige"* can be imagined.

Increasingly this debt of honor is being felt, acknowledged, and paid in the South as well as in the North. Obviously the nation's duty to the descendants of the slaves must be largely fulfilled through education; real education, such as shall bring out latent abilities and fit each individual for the work in the world which he can do best.

Such education will train young men and women, first, for honest self-support; second, for useful service to their race and community; third, for friendly cooperation with white people and with all people for the common good; fourth, for the disciplined freedom of honorable citizenship.

The Negro is today singing himself into the respect of the world; not with the precious old slave spirituals, exciting compassion, but with new songs that win admiration and disarm prejudice.

More and more difficult is the task of evaluating or describing the literary output of the young Negro writers of the day. It is too various for easy generalizations. There are too many strongly differentiated artists. The time has therefore come for critical essays upon individual creators. This is to say a great deal, by implication, on the subject of recent Negro achievement in literature.

Braithwaite's "Anthology of Magazine Verse," an event of major importance in the literary annals of each year, an authoritative and unrivaled volume, contains in the 1926 issue twenty-three poems by eleven Negro poets. Here, unsegregated, the Negro poet appears on his merit by the side of the white poet, competitor with him for the same honors. The fact is immensely significant. It is hostile to lynching, and to jim-crowing.

Not alone by farm holdings and bank accounts, nor by banks and insurance companies—though good; not alone by fulminating editorials and protesting memorials —though necessary; not alone by speeches and sermons, but by poems may freedom

be achieved,—freedom, and that respect for self and race which every living soul accounts the chief boon of life.—Southern Workman.

Movements for Interracial Amity in the United States

One, if not the chief, of the problems of the United States of America is that of race and race relationships. Our nation, made up of millions of people of many diverse racial extractions and backgrounds, must find a way to weld these heterogeneous elements into a considerable degree of homogeneity.

A few patriotic and public-spirited southern men began in Atlanta, in 1919, a movement that bids fair to rid the South completely, in time, of the old bitterness and hostility to each other of the two races found there together in such large numbers, and to unite these two groups in the one common purpose to make our whole nation, North and South, a Christian nation. The Southern Interracial Commission has to its credit a most splendid list of achievements: the lowering of the lynching record, more respect for law as it relates to the taking of human life, an increasing number of officers of the law determined to uphold the majesty of the law, better housing conditions for Negroes, increased school and recreational facilities for members of the less-favored group, etc. Each year the commission registers larger gains in these endeavors, and by so much increases the possibility of mutual respect and genuine good will on the part of each race for the other.

The going of Negroes in such large numbers to the North, their competition with other labor for jobs, and, more serious still from the standpoint of property values, their "invasion" of white residential districts (made necessary by the inevitable overflow of the Negro residential sections and the failure to provide other suitable places for them to live), and the Washington, Chicago, and East St. Louis race riots, all helped to make manifest the fact that our race problem in America is no longer sectional but national, and that unusual efforts must be put forth to meet the situation if bloody conflicts extending over a wide area are to be avoided.

The Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America is now co-operating in the movement for interracial amity through a Commission on Church and Race Relations. The work of this Commission is developed along two general lines: (a) educational publicity; (b) promotion of interracial contacts through local interracial commissions. A notable feature of the educational program is "Race Relations' Sunday." This was first observed in 1923. The plan is to have an exchange of pulpits on the part of white and Negro ministers on a designated Sunday, with the hope that both the ministers and congregations may have a visual demonstration of the relation of the races to each other. In 1926 the scope of this idea was broadened so as to include other groups besides Negroes and whites: namely, Jews and Christians, whites and Indians, whites and Mexicans, whites and orientals.

This commission has been especially active in the formation of local commissions in northern cities having a large Negro population. In 1925 twenty-nine cities reported such organizations. Each community group is to study its own needs with a view to devising ways to meet those needs.

To the student departments of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations is due most of the credit for leadership in this movement for interracial co-operation among college students, although the past two years have seen notable student gatherings under the leadership of church and denominational agencies where the race question loomed large. The Young Women's Christian Association began by giving Negro students representation on their regional councils. In the South and Southwest, where the traditional notion as to the relation of the two races is strongly held, it was not so easy to carry through the plan, but patience and persistence on the part of the leaders of both racial groups is rapidly making the plan the accepted order.

In the work of both organizations it was easily apparent, both North and South, that the great need was education on this matter on the part of both races. A beginning was made in this regard at the summer conferences. Prominent Negro leaders have been invited to address white conferences, and vice versa. Following these conferences, and often as a result of them, study groups have been organized on college campuses for the purpose of becoming more intelligent on the race question.

Perhaps nowhere in the country, all things considered, has there been greater relative progress in interracial co-operation than in certain student centers in the South. In several college centers, notably Nashville, Knoxville, and Atlanta, there are to be found a number of institutions for both races. Small groups, representa-

tive of each race and all the colleges, are brought together for study and exchange of opinion. The Nashville forum, composed of students from Vanderbilt, Peabody, Fisk, State Normal, Walden, and Roger Williams—the white and Negro colleges in that thriving city—is the outstanding example of the student interracial organization in the South. Here a luncheon forum has been developed, and all sorts of questions of interest to students of both races are discussed.

Perhaps the most potential agencies for permanent interracial co-operation are the official and semiofficial social agencies, such as community chests, departments of public welfare, Red Cross societies, family-welfare organizations, etc. These have immediate and continuous approach to both racial groups and offer a most natural opportunity for the leadership of both groups to find ways of co-operating together in meeting urgent community needs. These agencies are just beginning to sense their opportunity, and here and there are beginning to take the lead in developing community programs for the improvement of both racial groups, and that in accordance with sound, scientific social principles.

While it is undoubtedly true that the majority of the people of our nation are as yet apathetic and in some cases actually hostile to any measurable degree of interracial co-operation, it is also equally manifest that smaller groups both North and South are profoundly stirred by the needs of the situation. And these are the vanguard of the larger number of both racial groups who will ultimately come to appreciate the value of both races working together to realize all the things possible in the spirit of Jesus Christ.—Condensed from an Article in The Church School Journal, by Willis J. King.

God's Dream

Dreams are they, but they are God's dreams!
Shall we decry them and scorn them?
That men shall love one another,
That white shall call black man brother,
That greed shall pass from the market place,
That lust shall yield to love for the race,
That man shall meet with God face to face—
Dreams are they all
But shall we withstand them?
God's dreams!—Thomas Curtis Clark.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The Ku Klux Klan.

2. "The rising tide of color." "Men who are alarmed see these peoples, so vast in numbers, arming themselves with the secular knowledge they have learned from us in order to use knowledge against us. What can save us from this great peril of our civilization outrunning our Christianity? One thing only: the serious and consecrated effort of the Christian Church to interpret Christianity in such a way that these peoples shall become brothers in Christ—not merely rivals in the great material struggle for existence."—W. J. Dawson.

3. More attention should be given by Christian teachers and homes to the seven thousand foreign students now attending American colleges. If these become Christians in our midst, they alone could consummate all our missionary work abroad.—William J. Thompson.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Read the entire Book of Jonah. 2. What does 2 K. 14.25 say about the prophet Jonah? 3. What reasons are there for regarding the Book of Jonah as an allegory or parable? 4. Is there any indication in the Book of Jonah as to who was its author? 5. When may it have been written? 6. As an allegory or parable, how is it interpreted? 7. What is the great message of the Book? 8. What are some of its other lessons? 9. Read the Book of Nahum to learn how the Israelites hated Nineveh.

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

TREATING THOSE OF OTHER RACES AS WE SHOULD LIKE TO BE TREATED

Beginning the Lesson

Last week we talked about peace, world peace, and ways to attain it. What

did we decide to be the essential thing if all men are to live as brothers the world over?

From a papyrus wound about an Egyptian mummy two or three centuries before Christ, we learn that an Alexandrian named Dorion made a fighting machine so deadly that it was called the "Ender of War." And from that time till now new inventions have been heralded as destined to put an end to war; but the truth remains that the only sure ender of war is the spread of the knowledge of the ways of the Lord, and of the universal acceptance of his rule in the hearts of men. When the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God are everywhere accepted, war will cease. It is well that we follow our lesson about Peace with one about Brotherhood.

Exclusive Peter's Lesson

Peter was very exclusive. What do I mean by this? "I have known boys and girls in the Sunday-school who were very exclusive," writes Grace Winter. "They have a teacher of whom they are very fond, and they have a nice class of a certain number who are all friends together. When the superintendent puts some scholars from a lower class into this other class which is so select, the boys or girls of this class grumble and say: 'We don't want strangers in our class! We would rather keep it as it was, and we want our teacher to ourselves.' Have you ever known a class like that?"

The Jews have always felt like that. They had their own laws, their own religion, and they did not want to share their religion with anybody else. Exclusive Peter lay sleeping on the roof of Simon's house at Joppa during the heat of the day, and God sent him a vision. What was it? While Peter was thinking about the meaning of the vision, who came to see him? What did they tell him? Who was Cornelius? What kind of man was he? What did Peter do? What did Peter learn by that visit?

Cornelius found Christ, and so did the friends and neighbors whom he had invited to hear Peter. And Peter gained a new view, a broader outlook, a new conception of the gospel of Christ. He saw better what that vision on the housetop meant. "Of a truth," he said—what are the rest of his words? God is the Father of all men, whether Jew or Gentile, black or white or yellow or brown. Peter learned that the Gentiles wanted the gospel of Christ as much as the Jews did. He learned that they should be treated as he would like to be treated.

Treating Another Race as We Should Like to Be Treated

Dr. T. H. P. Shailer has written for the Journal of the Religious Education Association a report of discussions held at a Sunday-school in Englewood, N. J. Here is the problem he gave them to introduce the subject of how to treat those of other races:

Tom Sharp got up a football team and invited Jim Brown, a colored boy, to play on it. His sister Mary remarked that she thought Tom ought to know better. Tom asked why. Mary said she should think he would know without asking that it was not the thing to go with colored people. You were likely to acquire bad manners by associating with those who had not been well brought up. Besides, you were estimated by the company you kept. Tom replied that Jim had no worse manners than any of the rest of the team, except that he used bad grammar. He was in the same class at high school and was the best halfback they had. If Mary's manners could not stand that much contact they must be pretty shaky. Mary was snobbish. Anyhow, God made Jim the color he was. Mary said that God made everyone, but that was no reason for associating with everyone. It was better to keep in your own social class; otherwise sooner or later awkward situations would arise.

The questions then put to the scholars for discussion were these: 1. How much truth do you think there was in what Mary said? 2. What do you think are the arguments for and against inviting Jim to play on the team? 3. What are the arguments for and against race prejudice? 4. What are the arguments for and against associating with those in so-called lower social classes?

After very free discussion, the following statements summed up the conclusions reached:

1. There is widespread prejudice among many people against races of different color and standards of living. The fact that black people in this country were once slaves helps to strengthen this prejudice in their case. The problems are

always more serious where negroes constitute a large part of the population, as in the southern states and South Africa.

2. On the subject of difference in native ability of various races experts differ considerably in their opinions. Much that is said and written today is probably exaggerated. Most writers believe that the average intellectual ability of the black race is less than that of the whites. This does not mean that all white people are more able than all black people, any more than all men are taller than all women. Some black people have much more ability than the average white person, just as some women are much taller than the average man. There is much greater difference between some white persons than between the average white person and the average Negro.

3. For various reasons the black race has not had the opportunities for improvement that have been given to the white. When these opportunities have been provided, the race as a whole seems to respond favorably to them. Some very good records have been made.

4. Many persons believe that Negroes and those with any amount of Negro blood should not mix socially with whites. In this manner it is often hard to draw the line. Some would exclude Negroes from certain privileges supposed to be open to the public, such as hotels, entertainments, sleepers on railroad trains, church membership, etc. Some persons who believe in social separation, combine it with courteous treatment. Others do not hesitate to offend the self-respect of Negroes on very slight provocation.

5. As individual Negroes attain higher standards than the average white person, they are apt to feel bitter at such treatment. In many sections of the country the Negroes are keeping more to themselves and having less to do with white people. If this continues race misunderstanding may increase.

Then the scholars were asked: In view of all these facts, what do you think Christ expects of Christians today as compared with those who make no profession of Christianity? What is there that we can all agree that we ought to do as Christian young people in helping settle the Negro question?

The discussion centered on the last question. It was thought best for the present to avoid the more disputed topics, such as racial intermarriage, which usually injects heat rather than light. It was agreed that we should all take great care never to do anything that would offend the self-respect of a colored person on account of race, and to be especially courteous in our social contacts. The importance of a democratic rather than a patronizing attitude was recognized. Without the slightest hesitation the boys all approved by vote of the idea of giving a seat to a colored woman in a trolley car.

Sentence Sermons

Christ wishes us to rise above all divisions of color, race, creed and class, and to be kindly to our kind.—James Wells.

To render a service to anyone is the highest remedy for prejudice against him.—Lyman Abbott.

God will not seek thy race,
Nor will he ask thy birth;
Alone he will demand of thee,
"What hast thou done on earth?"—From the Persian.

Then let us pray that come it may
As come it will for a' that, . . .
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brothers be for a' that!—Burns.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Read all four chapters of the Book of Jonah and be able to tell the story. 2. What can you learn about Nineveh? 3. How was Jonah given a second chance? 4. Why was Jonah angry over the pardon of the Ninevites? 5. How did Jonah show rebelliousness? Selfishness? Bigotry? Cowardliness? Obedience? Pride? Contemptibleness? False patriotism? 6. What great lessons do you find in the story? 7. What is patriotism? 8. Can you be a patriot and still admire other countries?

THE HIGHER PATRIOTISM

GOLDEN TEXT: He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth. Acts 17.26

LESSON The Book of Jonah

DEVOTIONAL READING Isaiah 55.1-7

JONAH 1.1 Now the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. 3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah; and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah.

3.1 And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying, 2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. 3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey. 4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

4.5 Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.

6 And Jehovah God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to deliver him from his evil case. So Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd. 7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered. 8 And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. 9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. 10 And Jehovah said, Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: 11 and should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. A GREAT COMMAND DISOBEYED AND PUNISHED, 1.1 to 2.10. The word of Jehovah came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, telling him that he ought to go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was on the Tigris River 600 miles from the Gulf of Persia.

"The word of Jehovah came unto Jonah. How was there a message out of the sky? As he walked or slept or prayed, did these words shape themselves from silence into speech? Augustine heard a voice under the fig-tree at Milan; Joan of Arc heard voices in the forest of Domremy. We, indeed, have heard no voices. But all of us together have not compassed the boundaries of human experience. It is not wise, especially in these days of wonder in which it is our privilege to live, to deny the possibility of anything. What is impossible?

"This, however, is true, that the word of the Lord which came to Jonah has come also to a great many other people besides Jonah. God is all the time speaking to men. Messages from on high have in all ages and in all places been received by men. Whenever we are conscious of an urgent voice which says to us, over and over, You ought! You ought! it is likely that we are listening to the word of the Lord" (George Hodges).

Jonah disobeyed the voice. "Jonah says to himsel' the first time, 'I ken how it'll be. After I've cried mysel' hoase that Nineveh's to be destroyed, they'll begin to weep, and the Almighty'll change his mind and no destroy them after a'. It's aye his way gin folk repent. He's of great kindness and slow to anger, but he should keep to his word. He takes no thought upon me, and what a fool like I make o' mysel', crying that folk'll be destroyed when they winna be. It seems as though the Almighty didna ken his ain position to gang back on his word because folk commence to weep. But I'm his servant, and I ken my ain place; I'll no see him place himsel' in a wrong position, and I'll no see him place me in ane nether'" (Sandy Scott's Bible Class).

Instead of obeying the voice, Jonah went in the opposite direction, the story tells us. At Joppa he found a ship bound for Tarshish (the Phœnician colony on the southwest coast of Spain, then regarded as the very end of the earth), and went aboard.

"A wrongdoer is often a man that has left something undone, and not always he that has done something" (Marcus Aurelius).

God sent a violent storm; the sailors concluded that some one had offended his god, and they cast lots to discover the culprit. The lot fell upon Jonah, who acknowledged his guilt and advised them to throw him into the sea. Finding the effort to row back to land unavailing, the sailors prayed to Jehovah and then reluctantly cast Jonah overboard. The sea ceased from its raging and the sailors offered sacrifice to Jehovah. A great fish swallowed Jonah, and after three days cast him upon dry land.

II. THE SECOND CHANCE ACCEPTED, 3.1-4. "It is God's custom when he gives a servant a command to a definite duty, and the servant disobeys, and, by the goodness of his God after his fall and repentance is brought back to himself and to readiness to obey, that the old command is invariably repeated." The word of Jehovah came to Jonah a second time, and this time Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh.

"One of the most impressive things about God's dealing with men is his insistent following up of his invitations. He does not become discouraged at hesitations or even flat refusals; he does not say, 'You've had your chance and that's all you'll get.' The first chance is seldom enough for any of us. Would not you and I be far better servants of God if we learned from his method to be more generously persistent and resourceful in our dealings with one another?" (Henry van Dyke).

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, of three days' journey. "To judge from the ruins which still cover the ground, the circumference must have been about sixty miles, or three days' journey. The surrounding walls were so broad that chariots could roll abreast on them. All this was Nineveh proper, whose glory the Hebrews envied and over whose fall more than one of their prophets exult. But this was not the Nineveh to which our author saw the prophet Jonah come. Beyond the walls were great suburbs, and beyond the suburbs other towns, league upon league of dwellings, so closely set upon the plain as to form one vast complex of population, which is known is Scripture as 'the great city'" (George Adam Smith).

Entering the city a day's journey, Jonah proclaimed his message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." "It was a perfectly congenial message for Jonah. Only fear prevented him at first from going with that message with gladness. He contemplated the threatened destruction with pleasure. It was to him perfectly natural that God should destroy the Ninevites. Jehovah, he assumed, hated them and would desire their destruction" (John T. McFarland).

III. A GREAT REPENTANCE AND DELIVERANCE, 3.5-10. The people believed that Jonah spoke the truth, believed that God would destroy their city. The whole population fasted and put on sackcloth. See Light from Oriental Life. We are given impressive details about the king's mourning. He changed his throne and royal attire to a seat among the ashes and a covering of sackcloth. Neglected by their owners, the cattle filled the air with their groanings. "The Persians are said by Herodotus to have clipped the hair of horses and baggage animals that they might seem to share in the mourning for a general" (Dummelow). "Let them cry mightily unto God," the king decreed; "yes, let them turn every one from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands." "Even the Assyrian idolater is represented as realizing the essential requirements of the God of the Hebrews" (Carl Eiselen). "Perhaps God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not," the king said, speaking of God in terms that would befit man.

"God may relax the bow he has bent without fickleness; regret that he bent it, this he cannot do."

God saw the repentance of Nineveh, and did not the evil which he said he would do unto them. Yet his purpose was fulfilled.

"If in the spirit of sympathy a preacher tells a young man he is going to darkness and destruction, and if the word by its tone and truth arrests the attention and quickens the conscience of that young man, so that he turns his face towards the light of heaven and the love of Jesus, is not the prophecy fulfilled? Yes, it is fulfilled in the truest, noblest sense; it has entered into the young man's life" (W. G. Jordan).

IV. A GREAT ANGER AND A GREAT LESSON, 4.1-11. Jonah was very angry; he was left in the position of a false prophet, so it seemed to him, and he prayed that he might die. Elijah had prayed, "Take away my life," but for a very different reason from Jonah's, Elijah, as has been said, was jealous for Jehovah, while Jonah was jealous of him. And Jehovah said, "Doest thou well to be angry?" God had given him a second chance, but he was violently angry because God gave the Ninevites also a second chance! "Here was a triumph for Jonah—alone, and with no human help, he had terrified and converted the greatest city in the world. Even egotism, if humanized by benevolence, could have found gratification in this. But poor Jonah was all egotism. A witty Frenchman has defined an egotist as a character who will burn down another man's house to cook himself two eggs. Jonah was quite up to the mark of this definition. He could have burned down a populous and penitent city to enjoy this one egg, the *amour propre* of a seer" (Charles Reade).

Under a booth east of Nineveh, Jonah sat down to see what would become of the city. The booth was constructed of branches whose leaves quickly withered, but God caused a gourd to spring up whose living leaves sheltered him, greatly to his comfort and pleasure. But God caused the gourd to be eaten by a worm, and it withered away. When the sirocco from the desert of burning sand on the east blew over him, Jonah fainted, and again wished for death. "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" God questioned, and emphatically Jonah answered, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." "Thou hast had regard for the gourd which came up in a night and perished in a night" ("Jonah transfers his pity for himself, as an ill-used prophet, to the gourd which likewise has been hardly treated—a wonderfully true touch of human nature"), "and should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand—and also much cattle?"

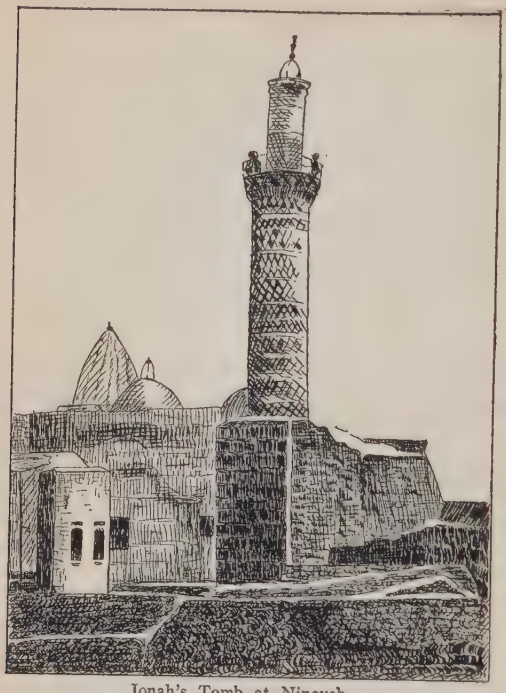
"Jonah was angry because the gourd had suffered, while, on the other hand, he was angry because the people had been spared. There is the same sentimentalism and lack of proportion abroad today. People will weep over the imaginary sorrows of the heroine of a novel, and yet have no tears for the real tragedies that are being enacted near their own door. The gourd and the people of Nineveh—who would compare them? And yet are there not mothers more concerned about their dogs than their children?" (R. Bruce Taylor).

V. THE MEANING OF THE STORY. The fact that this book is classed among the Prophetical Books of the Bible, rather than among the Historical, indicates that it has more similarity to prophecy than to history; that its value lies in its ideas rather than in its facts; that it contains something infinitely better than history.

Two views are held in regard to the book. One view is that the writer merely recorded history just as it literally happened. Another view is that the writer sought by means of allegory, a didactic narrative, a dramatically told story woven around the life of the prophet, who was a friend and counselor of Jeroboam II, 2 K. 14.25, to teach certain great truths. Dr. George Adam Smith points out that the abrupt close of the story at the very moment at which its moral is obvious is characteristic of all parables, and adds: "So obvious and so natural are the symptoms of the parable, that one really sins against the intention of the author and the purpose of the Spirit who inspired him, when we wilfully interpret the book as real history."

There is no statement in the book as to its authorship or date. "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city," we read in 3.3. Had it been great at the time of the writing of the book, the past tense would not have been used. Nineveh was practically destroyed in 607 B.C., hence we must conclude that the book was not written till after that date. Perhaps a much longer time intervened between the life of

the prophet Jonah and that of the prophet who wrote the Book of Jonah. The Hebrew is of later origin, and has been assigned by scholars to the period following the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. At that time Jewish narrowness had grown intense. The little group of returned exiles made every effort to strengthen themselves in the land against the peoples of many races with whom Canaan had been filled by the Babylonians. They rebuilt the temple, as we have seen, emphasized the dignity of the priesthood and the severe laws of the Sabbath, enjoined the putting away of the Gentile wives among them, and in every possible manner intensified their own exclusiveness. In such a time as that there came to the writer of the Book of Jonah a marvelous revelation of the fact that Jehovah is God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, and of the call of the Jews to make him known to the Gentiles. These truths the prophet taught his countrymen in connection with a story about the prophet Jonah. It is a noble protest against his countrymen's narrow and intolerant attitude toward nonIsraelites.



Jonah's Tomb at Nineveh

"For us Nineveh stands for the whole unchristianized world. For us the gospel is the Book of Jonah translated into the larger terms of God's love. John 3.6 is Jonah 4.11 so expounded as to include the whole world."

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

Put on sackcloth, 3.5. The mourning dress, sackcloth, was in truth a sack which was thrown over the person and extended down to the knees, but which, nevertheless, had armholes for the admission of the arms. It derives its name from the Arabic verb *to tear asunder,* because in the moment of the person's grief it was torn from the neck down to the breast, and sometimes as far as the girdle. The materials were a coarse, dark cloth of goat's hair.—B. A. John.

God prepared a worm, 4.7. On warm days when a small rain falls, black caterpillars are generated in great numbers on this plant, which in one night so suddenly and so often cut off its leaves that only their bare ribs remain; which I have often observed with much wonder, as if it were a copy of that destruction of old at Nineveh.—Pusey, quoted by Eiselen.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

In teaching this lesson, turn the thoughts of your pupils away from the unusual elements of the story to the important thing, the message of the Book of Jonah. Call for a few of the parables which Jesus gave, and let your pupils see the similarity between them and this longer Old Testament parable.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

PATRIOTISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

Beginning the Lesson

The Book of Nahum was written not long, probably, before the supremacy was

transferred from Nineveh to Babylon. It is a passionate denunciation of Nineveh, a cry for vengeance upon the hated capital which was regarded as virtually the Kingdom of Assyria. It is interesting to contrast this Book of Nahum with that of Jonah, the former fostering the spirit of hatred, the latter that of forgiveness and mercy.

What, in brief, is the story of the Book of Jonah? What is the meaning of the story?

Jonah's Patriotism

The feelings with which Jonah received the first summons to go to Nineveh are thus portrayed by Edward A. Marshall in Jonah of Gath-Hepher:

"Arise, go to Nineveh—and cry against it." "Cry against it!" he repeated. "That I have always done. I might do that well enough," laughed he, "could I choose my words, but that is not the message. How I wish it were—I'd go and curse them to the end. But I know the purpose of the message and the mind of him who spake it. This room was filled with mercy,—not with judgment. Doth not my prophet's instinct tell me why? God means to be forgiving,—and so could I be, to all but them. Assyria hath been a tyrant and a robber to us and all our neighbor nations. It hath never done one good thing for any people living. Never will I go," he cried as he sprang from the couch and walked the floor again. "From my youth I've hated it with righteous hatred, and loved God's people, Israel, and now—no, this call is not from God; it cannot be; would he preserve a nation that hath been nothing but a curse, and let his own beloved people be their prey?"

One Whose Patriotism Was Like Jonah's

"I'll give you my notion of things," repeatedly declared a sturdy old planter who bestowed much of his wisdom upon a contributor to the Atlantic Monthly. "I go first for Greenville, then for Greenville District, then for the up-country, then for South Carolina, then for the South, then for the United States—and after that I don't go for anything. I've no use for Englishmen, Turks and Chinese."

Patriotism, True and False

Patriotism is rooted in the human heart, as is proved in the literature of all the peoples of the world. I turn for the classic expression to Walter Scott:

> Breathes there a man, with soul so dead,
> Who never to himself hath said,
> This is my own, my native land!

What are we to do with it? Are we to try to crush it and uproot it? Surely if we are wise we must use it, and train it, discipline it. And this in these two simple ways. First, we must turn it into noble channels by making the nation we love worthy of our love, by making ourselves and others worthy of our heritage, by seeking to impress on ourselves and others the obligation of privilege, and by serving the land to which we owe so much. Next, we can discipline it by acknowledging that it is a human passion and therefore is not confined to us and our country. All men have it.

The true patriot will love the best in his country and seek the best for her. There was no more intense patriotism ever known than in the Hebrew prophets for Palestine stood to them for religion as well as for country, for God as well as for home, and they strove to conserve their national existence with a fierce patriotism. Because they loved the best in Israel they desired to have the nation brought back to nobler life at any cost. They were willing even to see her go out into the bitterness of the exile that she might be worthy to be loved.

The religious ideal is necessary to save every relation of life, to keep the family pure, to preserve politics from corruption, to save us from living merely in the life of sense, and setting us to larger and enduring ends. So here it is necessary to preserve patriotism and also to lead out to what is larger still. It points to a brotherhood of nations. To reach out to that larger ideal which is the world's great opportunity today will not mean the loss of anything worth while in what we call patriotism. A brotherhood only increases the worth of the individual members of it. And in this larger family of nations each will only gain something more from the wider life to which all are called. We will not love our nation less but all the more, because she will take her share in the burden and the glory of the future.—Condensed from Lest We Forget, by Hugh Black.

Cosmopolitanism

One who knows the world, and has lived in different countries with an open mind and a hospitable heart, sees how vicious much patriotism is. He despises it and is inclined to worship at the cosmopolitan altar. This seems to be such a larger and nobler ideal. To be a citizen of the world, to see that no one race has all the virtues, and no one land all the beauty, and no one nation all the achievements, to have a heart to which nothing human is alien—is assuredly a larger vision than a parochial, sectional, national viewpoint.

The fallacy underlying the cosmopolitan extreme can be seen from the following very simple reasons:

It carries with it the real danger of aloofness from the duties and responsibilities of the actual relations in which we are. There is a detachment which is the worst kind of selfishness because it seems justified by a larger ideal. A Hebrew proverb has it that the fool has his eyes in the ends of the earth. At first we would hardly be inclined to agree with this; for we are well acquainted with the type of fool who has his eyes on the village pump. The other proverb, however, has its obvious application.

There is a fool, not uncommon, whose mouth is always full of universal brotherhood but whose heart has never room for an actual brother close at hand. Charles Kingsley in one of his books has for a character an old Scotsman who speaks about the poor creatures who would rather hear an Italian dog howl than listen to an English nightingale sing. The cosmopolitan type who loves every country but his own is a pretty useless member for any particular help in an emergency. He has nothing to offer but criticism, and criticism is like a mustard plaster which has its uses and its limits. One finds also that this beautiful sentiment usually ends in moral neutrality.

Cosmopolitanism mistakes the whole nature of the evolutionary process. This is a hard thing to say about men who above all things plume themselves on their scientific attitude. The cosmopolitan is right in seeing that nationality is only a stage in the evolution of man. Man's interests widen in enlarging circles from the self, the family, the village, the clan, the nation; and the cosmopolitan is right in seeing that we cannot stop there but must move out to the larger circle still. He mistakes in assuming that we pass through and depart from the stage of nationality.

As a matter of fact we never do that in the other stages of man's progress. When a man extends his interest past that sweet gentleman self to take in even a small group like the family, we never expect him to quite forget self. He is still expected to count as a distinct member of the family. When a man extends his interest to the nation it does not mean neglect of the family. Rather if he is wise he recognizes that only through the family can the nation be strong. So, if we can go as far as to think of a family of nations it will not mean neglect of the single nation of which we are a part. Only in so far as our nation has a distinctive life can it make a distinctive contribution. The true ideal is not a vague and hazy cosmopolitanism, but a real family of nations in which the nations count.—Condensed from Lest We Forget, by Hugh Black.

The United States in the Family of Nations

Comprehension must be the soil in which shall grow all the fruits of friendship; and there is a reason and a compulsion lying behind all this which is dearer than anything else to the thoughtful men of America. I mean the development of constitutional liberty in the world. Human rights, national integrity, and opportunity as against material interests—that is the issue which we now have to face. I want to take occasion to say that the United States will never again seek one additional foot of territory by conquest. She will devote herself to showing that she knows how to make honorable and fruitful use of the territory she has, and she must regard it as one of the duties of friendship to see that from no quarter are material interests made superior to human liberty and national opportunity. I say this, not with a single thought that anyone will gainsay it, but merely to fix in our consciousness what real relationship with the rest of America is. It is the relationship of a family of mankind devoted to the development of true constitutional liberty. We know that is the soil out of which the best enterprise springs. We know that this is a cause which we are making in common with our neighbors, because we have had to make it for ourselves.—Woodrow Wilson, in The United States and Latin America.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The Book of Jonah, its character and teachings.

2. Does the missionary enterprise promote world-mindedness at home?

3. We shall never learn to live together internationally until we learn the art nationally.—Henry Levi.

4. The struggles of the world toward a new way of life in international dealings.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What did this event show Joseph and Mary about the Boy? 2. What did it show the Boy about the home? 3. At what age should children be free from parental authority? 4. What lessons for parents may we draw from this account? 5. What lessons for youth? 6. What was the teaching of Jesus in regard to the home? 7. What should a Christian home not be? 8. What should a Christian home be?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS
WHAT IS TRUE PATRIOTISM?

Beginning the Lesson

Raimon Lull was a philosopher and poet of the thirteenth century who felt called to preach to the Moslems in Africa. After spending nine years in mastering the Arabic language, he engaged passage on board a vessel bound for Tunis, but was seized with such terror that he let the vessel sail without him. Then he was overcome with remorse, and, though prostrated by nervous fear, begged to be taken aboard the next vessel. A second time his heart failed him, and remorse tortured him. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel," he cried, and his third attempt to sail was successful.

Many centuries before him, a man in the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the name of Jonah was called to preach to the heathen in far distant Nineveh, but he could not bring himself to obey the call, so runs the story in the Book of Jonah. His reason was different from that of Lull's: what was it? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

The Love of Country Is Natural and Right

It is not merely natural to be patriotic; it is reasonable and right. Nearly all that makes life pleasant and desirable comes through the town or the nation to which we belong. Thus our gratitude should make them dear to us.

Think how many thousands in our country have toiled for us! They have made roads and they have built churches and schoolhouses. They have established mails and post-offices. They have cultivated farms to provide for our needs, and have built ships that cross the ocean to bring to us the good things which we could not produce at home. They have provided protection against wrongdoers. So if we sleep in peace, and work and study and play in safety, and are wise and trained in the various arts of life, it is to the town and the nation that we owe very much of all this.

Then, too, in every nation such good results have been produced at great cost of suffering and life. It is because there have been patriots who have loved their country better than they loved themselves, that we have a country that we can love.

There have been heroes in peace as well as in war: men who have conquered the wilderness, who have upheld justice, and have helped on whatever was good and noble.

Patriotism is not merely the loving one's country and the being proud of it. It has its duties as well as its pleasures. We should not be contented merely to take the good that others have won for us, doing nothing ourselves for the country for which they did so much.

There are those who are unworthy to live in our country because they are not willing to suffer the least inconvenience on its account.

There are those who are among the most prosperous in the land, who have received more good from the country than most others, who will not even take the trouble to go to the polls and vote. They will see their city misruled, and will not even take the trouble to cast the ballot that would help to save it.

There are many men who sell their votes. Think how in many parts of the

world men are looking with longing at the liberty which we enjoy; yet there are those to whom this hard-won freedom means an opportunity to make a little money by selling their vote.

There are those still worse. I mean those who find in politics an opportunity to make larger gains in meaner ways. They buy votes and sell those that they have bought. They make bargains and "deals." The welfare of the country does not concern them. They seek only their own gain.

There are those to whom the light laws that are over us seem grievous. They rebel against all restraint.

There are those who stir up excitement among the people, setting class against class, that they themselves may be advanced.

These things I name, that when you are old enough to have the rights of citizens, you will use them as patriots, and refrain from and oppose such corruption as I have described.

There are other ways of serving the country besides those that I have named. All the private virtues, honesty and industry, are its best helps. Whatever tends to make men wiser and better is a service to the country.

The country will one day be in the hands of those who are now boys and girls. Serve it and guard it, and do all that you can to promote its good.—Condensed from Ethics for Young People, by C. C. Everett.

True and False Patriotism

We Americans have just ground for being proud of our country. The size of it is enough to make the heart beat. How big and varied and beautiful it is! What rivers, lakes, mountains, prairies, forests, plains! What variety of beauty, what range of climate and soil, and what manifoldness of natural resources! Where is there a country surpassing us?

But it is not its bigness which should give us our deepest joy. It is its greatness. Bigness is an attribute of matter, but greatness is an attribute of mind. Our country is great. Our men have made it great. We have given the world the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, and we have furnished a model which shows how forty-eight commonwealths can be compacted into a harmonious and mighty nation. We have given the world invaluable lessons in the work of public education, and have demonstrated that it is possible to have a state without a king.

This is a good time for us to think about our country, and ask ourselves, "What am I willing to do for it?" Patriotism is something more than brandishing a gun or waving a flag. The poet Horace wrote that it is beautiful to die for one's country. The time has come when it is far more beautiful to live for one's country.

Patriotism is sometimes nothing but a vainglorious feeling of superiority to foreign nations. At other times it is a fear of them. Again it is hatred of them. But all these feelings are partiotism in a degraded form. It is a virtue, and like all other virtues, it can be pushed too far, passing into a vice.

There lived once in France a soldier, Nicholas Chauvin, who was so demonstrative in his patriotic fervor that he made a fool of himself, and ever since his day a man who displays a cocky and hysterical patriotism is called a chauvinist. In England such a man is called a jingo. A jingo is always bragging about his country's preparedness to fight. In Germany this form of patriotism is known as Pangermanism, in Russia it is called Panslavism, and in the United States it is labeled "spread-eagleism." The only patriotism which some men seem capable of exhibiting is a contempt for other nations and a glorification of their own. Let us agree that all such patriotism is dangerous, as well as silly.

Patriotism is a genuine love of one's native land. When one truly loves his country, he is proud of its history, loyal to its ideals, and jealous for its future. It is not necessary for one to think that his country is superior to all others. It is enough to think that it is a good country, and to know that it is dearer to his heart than any other. It is not necessary for a patriot to wish that his country shall prosper at the cost of its neighbors; it is enough to wish that all the nations shall prosper through mutual regard for one another's rights and liberties.—Adapted from an Article in The Christian Herald, by Charles E. Jefferson.

Patriotism and Internationalism

Boy. If the wars are all over, how can I ever be a patriot? Isn't a patriot a man who fights for his country?

Grandfather. You love your mother very much, too, don't you?

Boy. I should say I do.

Grandfather. More than you love your country?

Boy. Yes, I think I do. But you never would have to decide which one, would you?

Grandfather. You would fight for your mother just the same as you would for your country?

Boy. Why, of course.

Grandfather. Did you ever fight for her?

Boy. Once. Billy Rhodes said that his brother caught a fish fourteen feet long, and I told him my mother said it was a lie. What mother had really said was that she thought Billy's brother must be mistaken; but I told him she said it was a lie, and he said it was not a lie, and finally I said, "If my mother says it's a lie, it's a lie if it ain't a lie."

Grandfather. "My mother, right or wrong!"

Boy. Yes, I guess that was about it. And then I went for him.

Grandfather. How did it come out?

Boy. Oh, I licked him. He went home crying, but he spoiled my new suit.

Grandfather. Did your fighting do your mother any good?

Boy. Not a bit; it made her trouble.

Grandfather. How do you suppose it is with countries? Have they always been helped when their sons fought for them?

Boy. I don't know as they have.

Grandfather. Fighting does not seem to have much to do with being a good son. Why should it have so much to do with being a good citizen? Suppose there never comes a chance to fight for your mother, you can prove that you are a good son. Love of your mother demands: first, that you mind; second, that you do your share in keeping the home going, whatever your share is; third, that you get on with any brothers and sisters that you happen to have; fourth, that you get on as well as you can with the neighbors and bring no disgrace on the family.

Boy. Why, yes, grandfather, it's just the same thing. Minding—that's keeping the laws of the country; and doing your share of work—that's earning your living and paying taxes; and getting on at home—that's treating your fellow citizens right, whoever they are; and getting on well with neighbors—that's international neighbors, being decent and generous, so that no nation can ever blame us and be right about it.—Condensed from Rules of Life, by Marion Colman.

International Good Will among Young People

Two years ago day school and church school pupils dressed dolls and sent them to Japan as gifts of friendship to the children there. Last year "Friendship School Bags" were sent by the pupils in the United States to the school children of Mexico. The bags were distributed on Mexico's Independence Day, September 16th. This was a splendid demonstration of international friendship and good will. What the project was for this year was not known at the time this was written, but we hope that you all entered into it enthusiastically.

Sentence Sermons

In Christ there is no East or West,
In him no South or North;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.—John Oxenham.

There is no perfect Christian who is not also a perfect patriot.—Cardinal Mercier.

Patriotism is God's way of training individuals for common action for unselfish ends.—William Adams Brown.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Where was Jesus' home before he began his public ministry? 2. At what trade did Jesus work while living at Nazareth? 3. What does Mark 6.3 tell us about Jesus' family? 4. On his first journey to Jerusalem, why was Jesus not missed earlier? 5. What did Jesus mean by his question in verse 49? 6. What is the number of the Commandment that bids us honor our parents? 7. Is one a Christian who is not a Christian at home? 8. Are you contributing as much to the home happiness as you are obtaining from it?

LESSON IX—DECEMBER 1

THE CHRISTIAN HOME IN A MODERN WORLD

GOLDEN TEXT: Honor thy father and mother. Ephesians 6.2

LESSON Deuteronomy 6.3-9; Matthew 19.3-9; Luke 2.40-52; 24.28-32; Ephesians 6.1-9; 2 Timothy 1.3-5; 3.14-15

LUKE 2.40 And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

41 And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast; 43 and when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not; 44 but supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance: 45 and when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him. 46 And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them and asking them questions: 47 and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. 49 And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house? 50 And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. 51 And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all *these* sayings in her heart.

52 And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOY JESUS, verse 40. Like every one who has ever lived, Jesus entered into the world as a helpless Infant, and like all normal children his powers developed gradually. As a Child he grew, and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him.

"O that I may grow!
What though Time cuts furrows in my face,
My heart may ever add grace unto grace,
Graces with added days still keeping pace,
O that I may grow!" (Maltbie D. Babcock).

II. JESUS AT TWELVE YEARS OF AGE, verses 41-50. When Jesus was twelve years of age his parents took him to Jerusalem for the first time to attend the Passover. Three times in this chapter (verses 41, 42 and 48) Joseph is referred to as the parent, or father, of Jesus. Dr. Garvie explains that "Joseph is rightly described as one of Jesus' parents, for in the home he provided for and protected him, filled a parent's place and played a parent's part. To him also God committed a trust and task." The Passover began on the fifteenth of Nisan, the first month, and lasted seven days. It was a journey of eighty miles from Nazareth, their home in Lower Galilee, to Jerusalem.

When Joseph and Mary started home again, the Boy, unknown to them, tarried behind in Jerusalem. They went a day's journey toward Nazareth before they missed him, for they had supposed him with kinsfolk or acquaintances in the same caravan. They traveled in the company of many others returning to Nazareth and nearby towns, the boys and young men probably walking together in groups, and the older ones by themselves, many of whom were riding mules. "I question whether there is ever a pilgrimage made from Jerusalem to the Jordan at the present day without a separation of children and parents equally prolonged" (Thompson). They spent part of one day hunting for him in the caravan, another day in going back to Jerusalem, and on the third day they found him in the temple, listening to the teachers and asking them questions so deep that all around were amazed at his understanding and answers.

"Joseph and Mary learned by the scene in the temple to know the Child himself better. Parents too often take it for granted that they know their own children, all about them, just because they are their parents and have watched them growing up. But it is not so. Children are all new human beings, with new faculties and blendings of faculty. They are, moreover, mysterious to themselves, and not seldom full of reserve towards their parents,

NAZARETH

reserve which becomes more close if they detect an inquisitive strain on the parents' part. You cannot break down that reserve; you can only watch it gradually break down if they find they can trust you through a term of years. So Joseph and Mary got to know the Child better when they saw him among the other people, and beheld him showing powers for which their home at Nazareth had not afforded scope and play" (W. H. Draper).

"Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?" his mother questioned, adding, "Thy father and I sought thee sorrowing." "How is it that ye sought me?" asked Jesus, surprised that they did not know where to find him. "Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" Mary had said, "Thy father and I" meaning Joseph and herself, but Jesus spoke of his Father in heaven. His answer may indicate only a devout Jewish Boy's interest in the temple, but we see in it also the Boy's sense of his divine sonship. His parents had failed to understand his words, but Mary did not forget them—she kept all these sayings in her heart.

"Sometimes the young may be more right than the old, and sometimes the old may be more right than the young. It is not the part of a wise man to presume that either is right because of age or youth. What is important is to avoid a breach and collision between the young and the old, between one generation and another, and to get the maximum of truth by combining experience with freshness. Mary and Joseph were bent on one thing, the Boy of twelve on another. Both were right, but both had something to learn from one another" (W. H. Draper).

III. JESUS IN THE HOME, verses 51, 52. "It is no irreverence to say that the world is more likely to become subject to Christ because he himself went back to Nazareth to be subject throughout his youth to his parents." Jesus remained quietly at Nazareth for eighteen years.

"To the Child the incident in the temple revealed, not that he was wrong in thinking his Heavenly Father nearer and greater to him than anyone else and that Father's house a place of learning and education more important than the learning about wood and iron, material and tools, but, when he saw his mother's anxious face and heard her troubled question, that there is a time for everything, and that he must not now take more time in the temple, but must go down and be subject to them in Nazareth and in the carpenter's shop. That is a very large thing in a boy's or young man's education—to learn how to treat his parents properly, to adjust that balance between what he wants to do and what they want him to do, between what he thinks he ought to do and what they thing he ought to do" (W. H. Draper).

Again we are told of the Child's all-around development: he advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

"It is not a sign of being in the grace of God when one is out of favor with men" (G. Campbell Morgan).

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

And the child grew, and waxed strong, verse 40. Christianity is the only religion that makes anything of the childhood of its Founder. The other religions of the world either have nothing to say about the childhood of their founder, or preserve only a few insignificant traditions. Tradition says that Lao-tse, the founder of Taoism, was born as an old man. And Christianity is the only religion that takes any particular account of children themselves. The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus' miracles in behalf of children, and of his love and tenderness toward children. The other religions are concerned only with adults. Their message is a message for adults.—Robert E. Speer.

When he was twelve years old, verse 42. It was a great day in a young Hebrew's boyhood when he became *Bar Mizvah.* It marked the turning-point when he took his fate in his own hands. From then onward he was fully responsible for all he did. He knew that he had taken a very serious step. He must have felt almost as though he had suddenly become a man. *Bar Mizvah* is a Hebrew expression meaning "Son of the Commandment." When this name was given to the Hebrew boy on his thirteenth birthday, a solemn religious service was held, and the whole family

met to rejoice and celebrate the festival. The Jews today still keep up this ancient custom, which they sometimes now call "Confirmation," borrowing that name from the Christian religion.—Gleanings.

They went up after the custom of the feast, verse 42. Pious Israelites were careful to accustom their children from the earliest years to the requirements of their religion, and hence often brought them with them to Jerusalem at the great feasts. Indeed, even the liberal school of Hillel made it binding to do so as soon as a child was able, with the help of its father's hand, to climb the flight of steps into the temple courts. The Passover itself was eaten only by males, but the week of the feast was the time of universal rejoicing, so that husbands were wont to take their wives, as well as their sons, with them.—Cunningham Geikie.

Head of a Twelve-year-old Boy of the First Century. From a bronze statue in the Metropolitan Museum, New York

They sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances, verse 44. One of the unchanging customs of the Arabs is to wait until they can assemble a company, or caravan, when setting out on a journey. They seek not only the safety which there is in numbers, for they may have to cross regions infested by robbers and wild beasts, but also companionship for the way.

Sitting in the midst of the teachers, verse 46. There were rooms off the temple courts where the teachers, famous "Doctors of the Law," were wont to meet their pupils, expound the law, and answer questions. A large part of the rabbinical books are said to consist of answers given by rabbis to their pupils' questions.

He was subject unto them, verse 51. This seemingly casual remark is full of significance. With us in Syria obedience to parents has always been youth's crowning virtue. Individual initiative must not overstep the boundary line of this grace. Only in this way the patriarchal organization of the family can be kept intact. In my boyhood days in that country, whenever my father took me with him on a "visit of homage" to one of the lords of the land, the most fitting thing such a dignitary could do to me was to place his hand upon my head and say with characteristic condescension, "Bright boy, and no doubt obedient to your parents." —Abraham Mitrie Rihbany, in The Syrian Christ.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

The lad Jesus in the temple, interested in religious things, asking questions of the great teachers, reaching out after truth, open to spiritual instruction and guidance, is simply the type of the natural human boy everywhere. He is in the junior and intermediate departments of every Sunday-school. He will be asking questions of thousands of teachers every Sunday of the year. We must not fail to recognize and understand him. Jesus' mother did not quite fathom him, not on the divine side of his nature simply, for that might not much appear, but on his human side. For she did not see what that lingering behind and talking with the doctors of the law meant. So she chided him. And he, wondering at her, said, "Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" That is where the unperverted boy will naturally be drawn not far from the age of twelve. We must look for him there and become wise to deal with him there.—John T. McFarland, in Etchings of the Master.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE CHRISTIAN HOME: ITS HELPS AND HINDRANCES

Beginning the Lesson

In the case of all rare excellence that is merely human, it is the first object of the biographer of a marvelous man to seek for surprising stories of his early life. The appetite for the marvelous in this matter is almost instinctive and invariable. Almost all men love to discover the early wonders which were prophetic of after-greatness. Apparently the reason is that we are unwilling to believe that wondrous excellence

was attained by slow, patient labor. We get an excuse for our own slowness and stunted growth, by settling it once for all, that the original differences between such men and us were immeasurable. Therefore it is, I conceive, that we seek so eagerly for anecdotes of early precocity.

In this spirit the fathers of the primitive Church collected legends of the early life of Christ, stories of superhuman infancy: what the Infant and the Child said and did. Many of these legends are absurd; all, as resting on no authority, are rejected.

Very different from this is the spirit of the Bible narrative. Both in what it tells and in what it does not tell, one thing is plain, that the human life of the Son of God was natural. There was first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn. One anecdote and two verses of general description, that is all which is told us of the Redeemer's Childhood.—F. W. Robertson.

The Parents' Responsibility

God trusted his Son to be mothered and fathered in a village home. He still intrusts to human parents souls which have the possibilities of becoming his children. It may not have been within the power of earthly parents to divert Jesus from his mission, but the destiny of the human infant for time and eternity hangs largely upon the way in which his parents discharge their high responsibilities. To neglect to utilize the opportunities of religious culture which the home affords is to commit an injustice against the child and to betray a spiritual trust. It is the decline of that sense of the parental religious responsibility that marked the earlier generations of our people which gives ground for the gravest apprehension concerning the immediate future of the Christian Church.—Editorial in The Christian Advocate.

Parents Should Respect their Children's Mission

In most American families, parents are lavish in their demonstrations of love for their babies and very young children. As the children grow older, parental criticism begins, and often the mother "nags" and the father issues arbitrary commands. Such unwise measures the child brings upon himself by his growing self-assertion —"obstreperousness"—and heedlessness, but such measures wound his pride and arouse his sense of injustice. The day will come—and he knows it—when his views will be respected, but just when he feels the dawning of the power that is to be his he receives the least consideration and attention.

The parents of Jesus knew that he had powers which they had not. So, often, do the parents of young geniuses. The Hindu Brahmin who bowed before his little boy saying, "To the divinity that is within you, my son," was right. How many Isaac Watts and Benjamin Wests are snubbed by the arrogance of ignorant adults into hiding their God-given talents, we shall never know.

Your son and daughter may lack virtues which you think you had at their age. They certainly have ideals and knowledges and purposes which you did not have. These things they share with the whole generation which soon will rule the world. They have direct relations with God, with the future. They mediate the progress that he intends. They are his tools, his messengers, the conductors of his power. By every device which you can compass you should seek to put your experience at your child's disposal, because you respect his mission.

How Jesus Regarded the Home

Through all the centuries the chief glory of Judaism has been its family life. Israel's entire social structure was built upon this institution as its chief corner stone. Jesus recognized that if this was imperfect or insecure, no stable social order could be established.

Jesus' own experience in his home at Nazareth had also revealed to him the social potentialities of a home in which the spirit of fraternity and loyalty prevailed. He paid the highest possible tribute to his own home life, for he expanded the idea of the family into his comprehensive social ideal of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus asserted that marriage is necessary to meet the innate social needs of man, and that its obligations are supreme. His hearty approval of marriage is shown by the zeal with which he attacked the current tendency to make divorce easy. With all his might he set himself against anything which threatened the integrity of the family.

Jesus evidently accepted the Old Testament teachings regarding the duties of children to parents. If the accepted chronology be correct, he himself devoted fully

thirty years of his brief life to the faithful discharge of his filial obligations. With hot indignation he denounced the Pharisees who encouraged the people to bring gifts when they were really needed by those who had the first claim upon them (Mk. 7.6-12).—Charles Foster Kent, in The Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus.

The Right Kind of Home

The great, overshadowing peril of a boy's life is not, as many suppose, his bad companions nor his bad books nor his bad habits; it is the peril of homelessness. Homelessness is not merely houselessness—the having no bed or room which can be called one's own. It is the isolation of the boy's soul; the lack of some one to listen to him; a life without roots which hold him in his place and make him grow. This is what drives the boy into the arms of evil, and makes the street his home and the gang his family; or else drives him in upon himself with uncommunicated imaginings and feverish desires.

An increasing risk which many prosperous families encounter is the tendency to homelessness, the temptations of the nomadic life, as though a home were a tent which one might fold "like the Arabs, and as silently steal away"; the slackening of domestic responsibility through the habit of transient residence in boarding-houses or hotels as refuges from the cares of a home.

Rich parents may be so completely preoccupied with money-making or money-spending, that their home becomes little more than a sleeping-place; and poor parents may, though with better reason, be separated from their children from early morning till late evening by the necessities of bread-winning at the factory or shop. In either case of homelessness, therefore, there is the same necessity for finding some substitute for a home. For the homeless children of the poor, philanthropy has devised a Placing-out System, which deports boys from the homelessness of a city to domestic life in rural communities. For the homeless children of the rich a similar Placing-out System has been provided by the establishment of boarding schools, where devoted and intelligent teachers accept the parental responsibilities which overburdened or self-indulgent parents decline.

What kind of American home is likely to make the right kind of American boy? There are, it would seem, three characteristics which a boy must recognize before he will think of his home as good, and which, if he does recognize them as marks of his own home, will make him remember that home as the most precious of his mortal inheritances.

A simple home, that is to say, is simply a home; not a step to something else, not an instrument of social ambition, not a mere sleeping-place, like a kennel into which a dog creeps for the night; but a center of affectionate self-denial and mutual forbearance, an end in itself, as though the main concern for a family were simply to make a home and to keep it simple. When a boy discovers that his parents find their satisfaction elsewhere than in the home,—in the club of the prosperous or in the saloon of the poor,—then the boy also will follow the group-instinct as it leads him to the street or the gang; in so far as he sees the home satisfying his parents, it is likely to satisfy him.

The second mark of a good home is consistency. The parental discipline of the home is to be chiefly maintained, not by precepts, but by the consistent conduct of the parents themselves. A boy is not easily moved by exhortation, but he is affected with extraordinary ease by contagion. A boy is in many points immature and unobservant, but one trait in him is highly developed,—the capacity to detect anything that looks like humbug. If he observe any considerable inconsistency between precept and example, between exhortation and character, all the well-intended efforts of his home are likely to be in vain.

Out of the simplicity and consistency of a good home issues its third characteristic. It is that relation between children and their parents whose historical name is Piety. Piety, in its Latin usage, was the name for the duty and loyalty of a child to its parents or of a wife to her husband. Æneas, in Virgil, was called pious because he was a good son of Anchises. Piety toward God is, therefore, nothing else than the affection of a son translated into a religious experience.

This, then, is the American home which makes the right kind of American boy,—a home where simplicity and consistency open into piety; where a boy thinks of his father, not as a drill-master or fault-finder, so that the first instinct of the boy is to keep out of the way; nor of his mother as yielding a fragment of her day to her children, while committing their nurture for the most part to hired experts;

but of both parents as comrades to whom it is a happiness to go, and as advisers from whom it is safe to learn.—Condensed from Religious Education of an American Citizen, by Francis Greenwood Peabody.

Bewildered Homes

Professor Ernest R. Groves, of Boston University, classifies homes as good, bad, and bewildered. Of the latter he says:

It is the bewildered home that is new. The victim of social conditions it is not vital enough to master, it clings to traditions that are in the process of crumbling. It clogs itself with the luxuries of material science while fearful of accepting assistance from the sciences that deal with people. Without a program, it either provides enough intermittent discipline for its children—if it has children—to widen the inevitable gulf between parent and child, or else it crushes the child with indulgences. It expects happiness without responsibility. For all its irksome problems it has one solution—farming out more and more of the family's earlier functions. The bewildered home is adrift. Materialism has lifted it from its anchorage in the elemental needs of human nature. The currents of modern civilization have been too swift. With the better values of life submerged the family drifts without landmarks. However fascinating, there can be no safety in a way of living that sends homes adrift.

Family Life Today

"What in your opinion are the chief causes of the increase of crime?" J. H. Crother asked a Chief of Police.

"That is a big and difficult problem to solve," the latter answered. "There are, obviously, many causes, but one fact is clear—a radical change in our home life, in many directions, makes for lawlessness and crime. There is now little or no discipline in the average family. Parents and children no longer have a common life. Too many young people run wild, chiefly intent on pleasures. They grow up selfish and never learn the lessons of obedience, self-restraint, and sacrifice. Sports, amusements and dress are paramount."

Dr. S. Parkes Cadman is of the same opinion. He writes: "If ever there is a breakdown of young life, according to the authorities of the police courts and the judicial courts and social settlement workers, as well as church workers, for ninety per cent of such breakdowns parents in the home are responsible."

What Makes a Home

"A house is built of bricks and stones, of sills and posts and piers;
But a home is built of loving deeds that stand a thousand years.
A house, though but an humble cot, within its walls may hold
A home of priceless beauty, rich in Love's eternal gold."—Nixon Waterman.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The influence of the home. Is our home life interesting? See Religious Education for October, 1927.

2. Capturing the home, the next great opportunity in religious education. See Religious Education for October, 1927.

3. There is greater command of leisure today than formerly: what is its effect upon home life?

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. In what sense is the Kingdom prepared for those on the right hand of the Judge, verse 34? 2. Is it the teaching of our parable that the doing of kindly, charitable deeds is the sole test of character? 3. Would you be willing to have your future life settled by the record you have already made? 4. What has our nation done for the hungry of the world? 5. How is our class proving a good neighbor to those in need? 6. Are we individually doing all we can for the unfortunate? 7. What is the best way in which to help the needy?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS AT HOME

Beginning the Lesson

You can all remember when you traveled on the railroad for half-fare; those of you who are under twelve years of age are still doing this. In Norway they have

what seems on first hearing it a curious term for a half-fare ticket. There it is called an "unconfirmed ticket," and a full-fare ticket is a "confirmed ticket." You see, in that land every child upon reaching a certain age is supposed to have been confirmed—baptized—and to have become a member of the church, and so the term applies to the age of the child.

In Palestine there was a somewhat similar custom in regard to boys who reached the age of twelve or thirteen: they were expected to fulfil the requirements of the law and the temple, and one of those requirements was that they attend the Passover Feast at Jerusalem. What great event in their history did that Feast commemorate? Where was Jesus living when he became "a son of the Law"? Where was he born? Where had he been taken between the Bethlehem life and the Nazareth life? Why? Do we know anything about his life at Nazareth before his visit to Jerusalem at the age of twelve?

Who will tell the beautiful story of his first visit to Jerusalem?

The Boy in the Home

A traveler who has followed any of the children of Nazareth to their simple homes, and seen the scanty furniture, the plain but sweet and wholesome food, the uneventful, happy, patriarchal life, may form a vivid conception of the manner in which Jesus lived. Dr. F. W. Farrar describes it: "The mats, or carpets, are laid loose along the walls; shoes and sandals are taken off at the threshold; from the center hangs a lamp which forms the only ornament of the room; in some recess in the wall is placed the wooden chest, painted with bright colors, which contains the books or other possessions of the family; on a ledge that runs around the wall, within easy reach, are neatly rolled up the gay-colored quilts, which serve as beds, and on the same ledge are ranged the earthen vessels for daily use; near the door stand the large common water-jars of red clay with a few twigs and green leaves —often the aromatic shrubs—thrust into their orifices to keep the water cool. At mealtime a painted wooden stool is placed in the center of the apartment, a large tray is put upon it, and in the middle of the tray stands the dish of rice and meat or libban, or stewed fruits, from which all help themselves in common. Both before and after the meal, the servant, or the youngest member of the family, pours water over the hands from a brazen ewer into a brazen bowl. So quiet, so simple, so humble, so uneventful was the outward life of the family at Nazareth."

Luther was wont to talk with much satisfaction about the Boy Jesus in the home, fetching water from the well and going on other errands, working with the carpenter's tools in Joseph's shop, and living the life of any healthy, normal lad. Here is a picture of the Lad as Dr. T. R. Glover draws it for us:

"The carpenter's shop, we may naturally suppose, was close to the house—a shop where men might count on good work and honest work—and what memories must have gathered about it! Those little brothers and sisters did not always agree and tempers would grow very warm and then the big Brother came and fetched them away from the little house to the shop and set one of them to picking up nails and the other to sweeping up shavings—to help the carpenter. They helped him. Like small boys when they help, they got in his way at every turn. But somehow they slipped back to a jolly frame of mind. The big Brother told them stories and they came back different people.

"Are these pictures fanciful—mere imagination? Are we to think that all the tenderness of Jesus came to him by a miracle when he was thirty years of age? Must we not think it was growing up in that house and in that shop? Or did he never tell a story—he who tells them so charmingly—till he wanted parables?"

He was a boy like other boys,
  And played and sported with the rest,
He had his troubles and his joys,
  And strove for mastery with the best.

He was great-hearted, tender, true,
  And brave as any boy could be,
And very gentle, for he knew,
  That Love is God's own Chivalry.

And one thing I am sure about,—
  He never tumbled into sin,
But kept himself, within, without,
  As God had made him, sweet and clean.—John Oxenham.

Honoring Parents

Every child asks "Why?" and the answer occasionally has to be, "Because you must do as you are told." Children cannot learn too early that obedience is the condition of happiness. But this mere obedience soon gives place to a higher motive. We obey our parents, not because we have to, but because we honor and love them and should be sorry to grieve them.

Long after Ruskin was one of the most famous of writers he used to go home to live with his mother at Denmark-hill. The severe old lady never could remember that her son was no longer a child. At dinner, before some of the most notable people of the time, she would contradict him and condemn his views as though he were a schoolboy; but his courtesy never failed him, and all agreed that the most wonderful thing in that strange household was the splendid consideration and honor and humility shown by the son to the somewhat exacting and unreasonable mother. Blessed are we if to the end we think that our father was the strongest and straightest and our mother the most beautiful and wise of humankind.—R. Bruce Taylor.

Living as Christians at Home

The story of St. Simeon Stylites, who attained a holy reputation by dressing in a hair shirt and living for years on the top of a high pillar, spending his time in prayer, greatly impressed the imagination of young Anatole France. He wished to emulate that saint, and not being able to secure the pillar, he improvised one by placing a chair on the kitchen table. Arrayed in something almost as uncomfortable as a hair shirt, he took his seat there, ready to spend the rest of his days in fasting and prayer. Unfortunately, however, the cook and the rest of his family were unable to understand the sublimity of his purpose, and they made life so disagreeable to him that he was obliged to give up his project. "Then," he writes, "I perceived that it is a very difficult thing to be a saint while living with your own family. I saw why St. Anthony and St. Jerome went into the desert."

The Youth's Companion observes: "It would seem that the family ought to be the easiest place in the world to be 'saintly.' Curiously enough, it is generally found to be the most difficult. It is easier to restrain your temper at a party than at home. It is easier to be courteous at a reception than in the family circle. It is less difficult to show thoughtfulness and nice consideration for others at a dinner party than it is to do the same at the family breakfast table.

"But it means vastly more to do these same things at home. In reality, it is pretty contemptible to show a pleasant side abroad, and a disagreeable side within the home. It does not mean very much to be agreeable when people are watching us. It does mean something in the privacy of home. It is a beautiful thing to see young boys very considerate for some particularly pretty girl, and ready to run any errand for some attractive teacher; it is a great deal more beautiful to see them show that same consideration for their own mothers.

"It is harder to be 'saintly' in our own homes, and yet the day will come when it will not matter to us what the people outside are thinking of us; some day we shall wish more than we wish for anything else on earth, that we had the members of our own families together once more, so that we might be kind to them and thoughtful for them, and show them how dearly we loved them. As surely as we live, that day will come. Why not obtain that wish now?"

Sentence Sermons

"If you are a child of God, your life in the home should reveal it."

Selfishness pulls down the roof of what might be a home and leaves it only a shelter.—Charles Ernest White.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. When did Jesus give the parable of our lesson? 2. What did he mean by saying, "Ye did it unto me"? 3. "Helping Neighbors in Need" is the title of our lesson: in what sense is the word "neighbors" used? 4. Read Whittier's poem entitled, I was a Stranger and Ye took Me In. 5. Read Lowell's Vision of Sir Launfal, and tell how it teaches the lesson of verse 40. 6. What are you doing for the hungry, the needy, the sick, the stranger? 7. Notice this coming week how many opportunities you can find for doing a neighborly deed.

LESSON X—DECEMBER 8

HELPING NEIGHBORS IN NEED

GOLDEN TEXT: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Leviticus 19.18

LESSON Matthew 25.31-46; Luke 10.25-37; James 1.27; 2.14-17

DEVOTIONAL READING Luke 6.27-36

MATTHEW 25.31 But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: 32 and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; 33 and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; 36 naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? 38 And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, *even* these least, ye did it unto me. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry, and ye gave me no drink; 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. 46 And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE SEPARATION OF THE EVIL FROM THE GOOD, verses 31-33. Among the words spoken by Jesus on Tuesday of Holy Week are the so-called Parables of Judgment recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew—the Parable of the Ten Virgins, the Parable of the Talents, and the Parable of the Last Judgment. The third parable is our study today. That parable declares that Jesus himself will come in his glory, and sit on the throne of judgment, and before him shall be gathered all the nation, and he will separate them as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, putting the righteous on his right and the unrighteous on his left. "You can fancy what was in the Master's mind when he said he would part folk, a day coming, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. 'Tis a passing fine way, you see, of picturing what no man of us can explain, try as we will. Ah, they are a heady and quarrelsome stock, these goats. Climbing everywhere—why, sirs, they are like selfishness on legs! All day the shepherd must ward his sheep from them as well as he can, and when folding-time comes he must make sure of shutting them off for the common weal. And that, I take it, is like the judgment. Goat nature must be parted from kindly folk—so my thoughts often run, here where goats are on the hills" (Wm. Allen Knight).

"Only one Judge is just; for only One
Knoweth the hearts of men; and hearts alone
Are guilty or guiltless" (Edwin Arnold).

II. SERVICE FOR OTHERS IS SERVICE FOR CHRIST, verses 34-40. To those on his right hand the Judge will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "The thought of God from the beginning looked towards those who by such conduct would inherit such reward" (R. H. Horton).

"As we think of the mystery of iniquity, of the many people at large who ought to be behind the walls of a prison, of the murders that have never been solved, of the cruelties that have never been punished or corrected—how comforting and sustaining it is for our weak faith to hear the Lord Jesus speaking to his own and saying, Be patient just a little while longer. The day is coming—it is not far distant—when those matters shall all be set

right, when the world shall know that goodness is better than badness, and that the Christian life is the only life that pays in the end" (Gerhard E. Lenski).

For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in (I was herboroules—harborless—and ye herborouden—harbored—me, is Wycliff's Version); naked (poorly clad) and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

The righteous are sincerely humble, and they ask when it was that they saw the king in need and helped him. "Wordsworth speaks of the little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love that are the best portion of a good man's life. The acts of kindness were forgotten just because they were instinctive, but, Jesus emphasized the point, they are decisive; they come, as another of his telling phrases suggests, from 'the overflow of the heart,' and they reveal it" (J. R. Glover).

"The Judge has made no mistake; he discerns and recompenses the hidden greatness of obscure life and trivial deeds. Many will be startled at the great assize at the revelation of the hidden worth of their apparently insignificant lives—one of the many delightful surprises that the generous King reserves for his lowly yet faithful children" (W. L. Watkinson).

"Verily, I say unto you," solemnly the King answered, "inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

Jesus did not teach that the only question at The Judgment will be whether or not one has been benevolent, nor that only actions count. The deeds mentioned were done "unto Christ," they showed that the doers had a vital, personal relationship to Christ. It is the spirit back of what we do or say that counts. Lives of unselfishness indicate the possession of the Spirit of God, they are the hallmark of the Christian.

III. THE FATE OF THOSE WHO FAIL TO SERVE CHRIST BY SERVING OTHERS, verses 41-46. To those on his left hand, the unrighteous, the King will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels." The Greek word here translated "Hell" is "Gehenna." Gehenna was a field outside the city walls of Jerusalem to which the garbage and other refuse of the city was carried and burned. "For I was hungry and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink." "When?" they ask, and receive the answer, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me." "There are few things on which the New Testament is more severe in its condemnation than uselessness and self-centered living. The sin of doing nothing in a world of clamant need is a sin that is pilloried and branded with the utmost condemnation of Christ" (Charles Brown).

"How strange it would be if, that day when the Lord shall say to some, 'I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink,' he should point any of us, not to slums or prisoners or to far-off heathen lands as places that had lacked our ministry, but to some lonely heart in our own home! Relationships taken as a matter of course, services never appreciated because they are rendered so constantly, kindnesses accepted as if they were merely duty with no word of love or praise, hearts hungry and thirsty through many a weary day for some expression of affection that never comes—these exist in many of our homes more often than we think" (J. R. Miller).

But the righteous unto eternal life.

This life is preparatory to the next; duty well done here is the right preparation for eternal blessedness. We do not know what the life beyond will be like. We do know that we need not fear the future if we make Christ our Friend and Guide here. If we want to inherit the Kingdom prepared for us, we shall so live here that we shall hear the joyful words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father."

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me, verses 35, 36. The rabbis also have some great sayings on charity that deserve to be remembered. "Whoever exercises hospitality willingly, to him

belongs Paradise." "To entertain a traveler is a greater thing than to receive a manifestation of the Divine Majesty." "Whoever gives a crust to a just person, is as if he had observed the five books of the Law." "Whoever visits the sick, shall be free from the judgment of Gehenna." "Imitate the deeds of God: God clothes the naked (Gen. 3.20), do thou also clothe the naked; God visits the sick (Gen. 18.1), do thou also visit the sick. He consoles mourners (Gen. 25.11), do thou also console mourners."—Dummelow.

I was sick and ye visited me, verse 36. Visitation of the sick was a duty universally acknowledged among the Jews. The great Jewish doctor Maimonides holds that this duty takes precedence of all other good works, and the Talmud goes even so far as to assert that whoever visits the sick shall deliver his soul from Gehenna.—Edersheim, in Sketches of Jewish Social Life.

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Do not trouble about the questions which such a parable as this naturally raises, but keep in mind that it is a parable, and not a picture of the Judgment scene nor a description of heaven and hell. Christ's object in giving the parable was threefold; to teach, as Paul says, that "We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ," for there is a life to come; that in the future life the good will be rewarded and the evil punished; and that what we do in this life determines what we merit in the future life.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE MODERN GOOD SAMARITAN: WHO IS HE?

Beginning the Lesson

In the wonderful description of the Last Judgment which Plato gives, he represents God as providing that both the judge and the judged shall be stripped of all the appearances and disguises of this life, and of the body itself, so that the judge with his naked soul shall pierce into the naked souls of those that are brought before him and see their very essence, nothing intervening. This is to be done with absolute impartiality, the judge not knowing whose are the souls brought before him; but, tracing in the scars and prints that mark the soul, the ill-living and selfish cruelty and luxury and insolence which have characterized the life, the judge marks each as curable or incurable, and dispatches each to the reward or punishment deserved.

This has been the instinctive declaration of all thoughtful races. They have uttered their belief in very various forms, but they agree in looking forward to a time when each man shall be known for what he really is, and shall be rewarded according to his deeds.

Are you willing to become transparent, that all your imaginings, your desires, the real bent of your disposition may be apparent to all? To what do your thoughts and desires gravitate in your times of unguarded, unconstrained leisure? Is it to things spiritual or to things of the flesh? Which presents itself to you with the greater zest and attractiveness, your own advantage or the growth of good in the world? Christ's self-sacrifice and devotion from first to last to the interests of the whole body of men, his aim in life and spirit, are not what we may or may not adopt as we please. His spirit and aim are the only tests which will be put to us in the judgment. We shall not be asked what we have felt or thought or believed or hoped, but what we have done. Have we spent our life in trying to gather comforts round ourselves, or have we, in a wider or narrower sphere as God has appointed, striven to lessen evil of every kind, to remove sin, distress and want?—Marcus Dods, in Christ and Man.

The Sin of Doing Nothing

One of the most persistent errors of religious thinking is the idea that goodness consists chiefly in not doing certain things. The negative aspect is emphasized out of all proportion. Perhaps the prevalence of this error dates from our childhood when our rightly exasperated parents told us to "sit on that chair, and be good"—which we promptly interpreted as an order to do nothing.

And most of us content ourselves with the reflection that we have not been guilty of this or that particular sin. We quite forget that Jesus' chief condemnation was reserved for those who neglected to perform the acts for which love calls. The rich man who neglected the beggar at his gate is pictured in hell. The man

who neglected to use his talent is marked as a failure. The people of whom he could say, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren," are condemned to punishment. Not one of these people had been guilty of anything except doing nothing.

Evidently in Jesus' teaching the most blameworthy sins were sins of omission. If we are to be truly his disciples do we not need a radical revision in our conception of sin?—Tertius van Dyke, in Light my Candle.

How One Failed to be a Good Samaritan

"Master, I have this day broken no law of the Ten—have hurt no one. Is it enough?"

"Child, there stood one by thy side burdened with heavy tasks of lowly, earthly labor. For a little help, a little easing of the burden, he looked to thee. Thou hadst time and strength."

"Master, I did not hear."

"Thine ear was dull. There came a guest to seek thy converse, a human friend in quest of fellowship. I marked thy sigh, thy frown. Why was thy heart not glad?"

"I was reading. I hate to be disturbed, to be called from great thoughts to trifling talk."

"The children would have thee some few moments in their play. Without thee they went wrong—how far wrong thou wilt not know. It is too late."

"Child's play? But I was searching for a hidden truth of spiritual import."

"Thou didst not turn aside to lift that lame one who had fallen by the way."

"I was in haste to do what I had planned. I meant to help him when I should return."

"Another lifted him. Shall I question further?"—Unknown.

I never cut my neighbor's throat;
  My neighbor's gold I never stole;
I never spoiled his house and land;
  But God have mercy on my soul!
For I am haunted night and day
  By all the deeds I have not done;
O unattempted loveliness!
  O costly valor never won!—Marguerite Wilkinson.

Thou Shalt Love thy Neighbor as Thyself

To love one's self at the expense of one's fellows is for selfishness to become malignancy. To love one's neighbors more than one's self is foolishness and self-destruction. Whatever of value the individual has, comes from fidelity to the first of these principles. Self-love working towards reason makes a man a scholar; working towards his imagination makes him an artist and inventor; working towards his gift of speech makes him an orator; working with pride makes him self-reliant and self-sufficing. And when the principle of love for others asserts itself, this love, working towards poverty, transforms man into a philanthropist; working towards iniquity makes man a reformer; working towards freedom makes him a patriot and a hero; working towards God makes him a saint and a seer.

Christ recognized selfness as a principle most proper and praiseworthy, and one to be used as the basis and measure of all moral worth. By so much as a man loves and secures for himself the physical benefits and social incitements of life, by that much he is to love his fellows. And the failure to love one's self wisely and passionately ends by making it impossible for man to love his fellows. Happy the philanthropist whose generosity has founded school or library; but this gift of today is made possible only by the industry and thrift of yesterday. Jesus bids each youth to love and make the most of himself, that later on he may be bread to the hungry, medicine to the wounded, shelter to the weak, and so fulfil the highest law of service to his neighbor.—Condensed from The Contagion of Character, by Newell Dwight Hillis.

"Ye Did It unto Me"

The Gospel of Christ is the gospel of action. It not only calls upon men to believe a statement but also to follow a Savior. Its genius is not adherence to a plan but obedience to a Man. It emphasizes doings rather than doctrines, and offers a creed only as the foundation of character. Its inspiring and empowering example is that of One whose life was above everything else strenuous in the doing of good.

"Ye did it unto Me." There is a holy art of anonymity, the giving and doing for his sake and for his eye alone, which is as beautiful as it is rare, and which imparts to those who have learned to practice it an inner peace and glory which nothing else can produce. It is this which determines the value and quality of every action,—is it done for Christ and for his glory alone? Our debt to him is payable at the bank of humanity's need, and he estimates at its eternal worth all that is done to alleviate that need, even though it be unattended with blare of trumpets and the limelight of self-advertisement. "By him actions are weighed."—Condensed from Redeeming Vision, by J. Stuart Holden.

The Duties of a Modern Good Samaritan

To stand in the dark and hold a light, to be full of joy and turn the charming side of religion to the irreligious, to know the weight of a burden and lend our shoulders to the oppressed, to possess the friendship of Christ and give that friendship to the lonely, are some of the things that Christ is asking us to do for our neighbors. While all nations and classes are my kin, and to them I am a debtor, yet my first duty belongs to those into whose faces I daily look and whose hands I should often clasp.

The cordial social life of the rural districts makes a striking contrast with the unsociability of crowded cities. The closer people are crowded together the farther apart they are in service to each other. There is no loneliness so painful as that of a great city. In the multitudes' mad rush for pleasure and profit, others are forgotten, and this is where ties of brotherhood mend so slowly. Judgment is not alone in eternity, but it waits on the streets, in the stores, on the railroad train and at the doors of our houses.

"Somebody near you is hungry and cold;
Send him some aid today;
Somebody near you is feeble and old,
Left without human stay.
Under his burden put hands kind and strong;
Speak to him tenderly, sing him a song;
Haste to do something to help him along
Over his weary way."

The need of one is the opportunity of the other. It may be a friendly visit, or a defense under some misunderstanding, or the need of a brother when one has gone altogether wrong, or financial help, or a word of kindness, or guidance out of the paths of sin, or a mere look of brotherly interest, or all these together; but whatever be the need, it is an opportunity for me both to serve God and my brother, and at the same time to make of myself more than I am, for my inner life has its development in meeting cases of need as far as it is possible for me to do so. If I am too heavily engrossed with my own affairs—and often this is the case—or if seeing it I do not respond—and this too is a common experience—it is that much of life gone out of me.

A lost opportunity of help to others is so much loss of life, as one when physically wounded loses so much blood and, if he loses a large quantity, he becomes pale and weak. It is so in our dealing with each other. If no opportunity to help others is met, the human soul pales and shrinks; if we help only those we like and who like us, the development is only partial and sickly; but, if we go to those who need us irrespective of our likes or dislikes, but surely go where help is most needed, the human soul grows into the divine image.

The beginning of being happy with God in heaven is here in human life with all its worries, irritations, disappointments and failures. It is the beginning of heaven when we unselfishly serve each other, when we give ourselves to meet another's need.—Condensed from My Brother and I, by Peter Ainslie.

Concrete Examples of Helping Neighbors in Need

It is Mrs. Garfinckle's front porch. Selma, the cook, has suddenly left to marry that long-legged clerk of Mr. Tout's. "And she never told me—but of course I found out, and I gave her my blue silk and my second-best suitcase; and I told her she could fetch the sofa and two armchairs that have been gathering dust in the attic. The poor thing has almost nothing at all. By the way, you said your Minnie couldn't wear that new suit . . ." But Mrs. Jones is preoccupied with a problem of her own. It appears that Jeff, the colored garden helper, has been arrested for stealing a bicycle. Bail has been fixed at $100, and his mother—"You know her, that

fat woman who does the washing for Mrs. Clark"—has been trying frantically to borrow that amount from Jeff's former employers. "He isn't a bad boy, Jeff; and I'm sure he is so scared he won't do anything like that again. But Miss Purdy wouldn't give a cent and the Leaches are out of town. So I gave her $30—that was all I could lay my hands on—and went over with her to Mr. Carson, who lent her the rest. We can't let Jeff stay in that place."

"By the way," asks Mrs. Noller, "what became of that Chinese student—you remember?" "Oh, Tsang? He wrote me at Christmas that he has been appointed health officer in Two-Ho. He wishes to be remembered to all the folks at the church; he says he never knew the meaning of Christianity until so many of you people opened your homes to him and treated him like a cousin."—Bruno Lasker, in The Christian Advocate.

What Are You Doing?

The problem of hunger—the bread and butter problem, the perennial problem of getting a living. What is your class doing to produce a better understanding between employer and employed? Why not organize an Employment Bureau in your class or church? Why are people hungry in your town? What are you doing for the deserving poor?

The problem of thirst is next. The thirst is most perplexing in what we denominate as the drink problem. What are you substituting in your town for the so-called "poor-man's club"?

The stranger within our gates—his name is legion; and also Cohen, Strobokski, Ananikian, Kankopadous. Uncle Sam will be judged and America's destiny as a nation will be decided according to the way in which the stranger is "taken in."

The naked and clothing are Christian problems. Why do these folks not have clothing enough? Is it lack of thrift, liquor, laziness? These are some "whys" for the Christian church to answer. Meanwhile do not forget to relieve the suffering while you study and investigate.

What are you doing about the prisoner? What do you know about your own reform school, the county jail, the state's prison? Is there a juvenile court in your city? Why not send a quartet to sing in prison? Why not furnish Sunday-school teachers to help the chaplain? Have you ever tried to help a released prisoner to get a job? Sympathy, a kind word, a helping hand, will do more than legislation to make a man of him.

What are you doing for poorhouses, town and country, old people's homes, and every kind of institution for the help and the care of the unfortunate? What they need, what they hunger for, is real friendship, kindly words, little reminders in the way of cards and letters. Is your class doing anything in this "program"?—Condensed from an Article in The Pilgrim Magazine, by Thomas C. Richards.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Doings versus doctrines.

2. The best way to be a Good Samaritan is to help those in need to help themselves. Community relief work.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What industrial workers are oppressed today? 2. What was the condition of labor in Paul's day? 3. What does Paul teach about the treatment of slaves in his letter to Philemon? 4. Can a man be a successful business man and yet be an honest, sincere Christian man? 5. What are the great labor problems of today? 6. What is their solution? 7. What should be the personal relation between employer and employed?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

HOW TO BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR

Beginning the Lesson

Lord Shaftesbury was a Christian philanthropist beloved by multitudes. When he died all whom he had helped were anxious to show honor to his memory. When the funeral procession reached Trafalgar Square forty thousand factory workers, flower girls, and other laborers were gathered, and all along the route there were delegates from Sunday-schools, and from the homes and training schools which he had supported.

One delegation carried a banner with the words, "I was a stranger, and ye took

me in." Another had a banner bearing the inscription, "I was sick, and ye visited me." The working girls had a silken flag inscribed, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me." Of these beautiful tributes the great philanthropist was worthy. What parable spoken by Jesus did his friends know? Tell the parable.

The Rewards of the Unselfish Life

In his picture of the Judgment, Jesus shows us a number of people who were just ordinary folk who did beautiful things. They had their pleasures, of course, and their business, they earned their bread and butter like every one else, but they gave thought to those about them and took the trouble to help those in need. They were men and women of unselfish spirit who lived unselfish lives. Their great aim was to make others happy.

You must not think that it was easy to do so much for others as did the men and women of whom Jesus here speaks. If they had done their ministry only when they felt like it, they might have found it easy, but they did it constantly, and there were times when it was hard to be unselfish, when there were difficulties in the way, when the sick and hungry were fault-finding and disagreeable, when they themselves were sick and weary. Why did they do it? Listen to Jesus: he tells us that he was anointed, sent, for that work and life. He did it not only because his heart was in it, but because he believed it was God's will and purpose for him. And that is what all these people felt. They believed that only by helping others could they please God and do his will.

A Modern Good Samaritan

One very hot summer afternoon, two elderly ladies started for a ride on the electric cars in a town not far from Boston. As the weather was extremely oppressive, the younger of the two took no wrap. Soon after they set out, signs of a gathering storm appeared, but as the women were strangers in the place, they thought it safer to keep on to the terminus of the road, rather than to change cars and perhaps take a wrong one back. The violence of the wind increased, the rain began to fall, and by the time the car had reached its destination the storm was raging.

When the return trip began, matters became even worse, for the car was open, and the curtains at the sides could be kept down only as the passengers, mostly workingmen and women from a near-by factory, held them by main force.

The change in the temperature was great; it grew positively cold. The younger woman, unprotected by any wrap, was beginning to feel that she was in danger of taking a severe cold from the exposure, and she tried to cover one shoulder with a corner of the cape with which her more prudent companion had provided herself.

At that moment, a working girl sitting behind them leaned forward, and said, "Are you not afraid of taking cold?"

Even as she spoke she snatched off her coat and threw it over the shoulders of the younger woman. In reply to her protests, the girl declared that she was almost at her home, and after giving her name and address she alighted from the car and ran through the pouring rain to a house near by.

The friendliness of the act was the more touching since the loss of the coat would evidently have been a matter of moment to the owner. Not less charming than the act was the note that the girl wrote after the garment had been returned to her with a letter of grateful appreciation of the kindness she had shown to a stranger. The note showed that she was quite unconscious of having done anything unusual or praiseworthy.—The Youth's Companion.

How to Be a Good Neighbor

An observing person wrote to the Philadelphia Press an account of the following incidents which he noticed on one walk through the streets:

A hurried man was observed to brush against an old woman selling knickknacks, knocking one or two small envelopes to the pavement. A few steps, and he halted, turned, and saw the trivial damage inflicted. He hastened back, gathered up the envelopes and placed them on the old woman's tray, saying:

"Pardon me, madam. It was an accident. I was in a hurry, and thinking."

As he lifted his hat, his eye caught the sign announcing the contents of envelopes. "Wait," he said, handing out a quarter, "my boy can use some of these."

At Tenth and Chestnut streets the lamp-post was covered with fresh green paint, and a sign to that effect. Another man, this time a young one, in deep thought,

would have brushed off a good share of the paint with his sleeve had not a stranger reached out and pushed him off a bit, saying "Wake up, Bill!" "Bill" looked at the sign, grinned sheepishly, and said, "Thank you!"

Perhaps the most beautiful incident noticed was that of an old lady, a dainty little woman who might have floated through the pages of "Cranford." Her old-fashioned bonnet, with black strings, covered snow-white hair; her cloak, a frame that was too weak to swing the big door she tugged at. Twice she tried, and twice its weight thrust her back. Then from the crowd stepped a sturdy young fellow. With one hand he pulled the door open, with the other he lifted his hat. The old lady fluttered by with a bow and smile. Quickly the crowd swallowed them up.

Surely "And they passed by on the other side" could not have been written of this generation.

Which Proved Neighbor unto Her?

In a certain tenement of the worst kind there was a family in direst need. The man was a drunkard. His wife had "seen better days." When the neighbors found out her plight, the most extraordinary season of plenty set in under that roof. At every meal hour some one called at the door of the H——'s begging the acceptance of this or that article of food "left over." When Mrs. H—— finally saw through the subterfuges, and protested that they were depriving themselves to help her, the answer she got was a half-shamed, "Oh, never mind! You can't stand it as we can, and anyway we don't want to see you come down." For "come down" read "ask public relief." They did not see it. The woman got upon her feet. She had known better days—had friends then, who, now that she lived in a tenement—and such a tenement—passed by on the other side. "Which of these, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto her?"—Jacob A. Riis.

How to Help Far-away Neighbors

Madeline had gone to Africa with her father and mother, who were missionaries, as told in a story in Rules of Life for Boys and Girls, by Marion Colman. The mission school was a miserable building, and she often heard her father say, "I wish we could afford a better building and good bright lights for them!"

"I think the children in America would love their far-away neighbors better and do something for them, if they knew more about them," said Madeline one day. "I'd like to write a letter to the children of America and tell them about these dear black people. You know, the children in America spend an awful lot of money on candy and chewing-gum; but if they got interested in being neighborly to people far away, they might be willing to go without it part of the time. And if they sent the money to you, it would help build the new school, wouldn't it? May I write the letter?"

"Indeed you may," her father replied. So Madeline wrote the letter and her father sent it to church headquarters, where it was printed and sent to the church schools. And it turned out just as Madeline hoped.

Sentence Sermons

Unheard, because our ears are dull,
Unseen, because our eyes are dim,
He walks on earth, the Wonderful,
And all good deeds are done to him—Whittier

A wrongdoer is often a man who has left something undone, and not always a man who has done something.—Marcus Aurelius.

Every kindness done to others is a step nearer to the life of Christ.—Dean Stanley.

"A good neighbor is always alive to the opportunity of doing good."

The greatest thing a man can do for his Heavenly Father is to be kind to some of his other children.—Henry Drummond.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Where in the Bible is Deuteronomy found? 2. Who wrote Ephesians? 3. First Timothy? 4. What was the law in regard to workers as given in our text from Deuteronomy? 5. What did Paul say was the duty of workers? 6. Of masters? 7. Is mental labor more honorable than manual labor? 8. What makes any work honorable? 9. What makes any work dishonorable? 10. What does the employer owe those who work for him? 11. What do the workers owe the employer?

LESSON XI—DECEMBER 15

THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT IN INDUSTRY

GOLDEN TEXT: As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. Luke 6.31

LESSON Exodus 1.8-14; 20.17; Deuteronomy 24.14, 15; Amos 5.6-15; Zechariah 8.16, 17; Matthew 20.1-16; Mark 12.1-9; Luke 3.14; Ephesians 6.5-9; 1 Timothy 6.17-19 DEVOTIONAL READING Matthew 7.1-5

DEUTERONOMY 24.14 Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy sojourners that are in thy land within thy gates: 15 in his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it (for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it); lest he cry against thee unto Jehovah, and it be sin unto thee.

EPHESIANS 6.5 Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; 6 not in the way of eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; 7 with good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; 8 knowing that whatsoever good thing each one doeth, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free. 9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him.

1 TIMOTHY 6.17 Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is *life* indeed.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. LAWS REGARDING THE TREATMENT OF A SERVANT, Deuteronomy 24.14, 15. The law in regard to the hired servant was that, whether an Israelite or of another race sojourning in their land, he must not be oppressed. He must be given his wages at the end of the day, for being poor, he was in need thereof; otherwise would he make known to Jehovah the failure and it would be accounted a sin unto the master.

"For thousands of years those in control of political and industrial power in the nations of the world have used that power to oppress the weak. For thousands of years, under every kind of industrial society thus far developed, the great mass of the world's burden bearers have been doomed to lives of poverty and want, while the few have lived in luxury. The few have declared the wars; the many have gone forth to battle and to death. The few have made the laws, have told the many under what conditions they should labor, what rewards they should obtain for that labor, what they should think, what they should believe. Until comparatively recent times, except for occasional rebellions, the many have suffered in silence and obeyed" (Harry W. Laidler).

II. THE OBLIGATIONS OF SERVANTS AND MASTERS, Ephesians 6.5-9. In the time of Paul all servants were slaves, and here in his letter to the Ephesians he bids servants be obedient to their masters, with fear and trembling, that is, with anxious desire to please them, and with undivided allegiance, as unto Christ. Recall our text of last week, where Christ speaks of deeds done to others as done to him. They should not give eye service, merely work that would "get by" with their human masters, but as slaves of Christ, do the will of God heartily; performing their tasks cheerfullly as unto God, not unto men; knowing that the good work of every one, whether a slave or a free man, shall receive its reward from the Lord.

"Shoddy work is not only a wrong to a man's own personal integrity, hurting his character, but it is also a wrong to society. Truthfulness in work is as much demanded as truthfulness in speech. False and sham work of every kind is a sin against brotherly love; for somebody suffers for it somehow. We never can tell who must suffer, as when a ship springs a leak

through badly driven rivets, or when cheapness is got by adulterating food. Truthfulness in work applies all round and in all sorts of work. Some men will steal their master's time who would never steal his money; but perfect honesty has a wider sweep than the narrow limits of our common ethics" (Hugh Black).

The masters likewise have their obligations; they also must show good will to their servants, and must avoid threats; knowing that the common Master of all is in heaven, and in his judgment there is no respect of persons, no regard for differences of earthly positions. "Paul does not tell them to emancipate their slaves; but he tells them to love them as brethren (Philemon 16). This does not free the slave, but it frees slavery of its evils" (Dummelow).

"There is not an industrial problem that is not rooted in, that does not depend on servants who are serving not with eye-service. You who are masters know that; you who are mistresses know that. You want clerks in your store and maids in your kitchen, who do not seek simply to satisfy your eye, and who require your watchful care, but who have a conscience that directs and a sense of responsibility to themselves and to their God. On the other hand, no servants, no employees, can ever secure their just and equal rights until employers come to recognize the other half of this prescription—Masters, give unto your servants—not that which is the least you can give, the least you can get the service rendered for, the least possible wage, but that which is just and equal. We must have just and noble men, and God-fearing men, for employers and for employed. Then the industrial problem is solved, and not before" (Lyman Abbott).

III. THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE RICH, 1 Timothy 6.17-19. Paul tells Timothy to charge the wealthy not to be conceited (highminded), not to set their hope upon riches which are uncertain, but upon God to whom they owe their good things. God giveth richly all things to enjoy. Christ came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly. The rich should do good with their wealth, become rich in good works, ready to share, willing to communicate, and so lay up for themselves treasure in heaven.

"There is a tendency at the present day to recognize health and strength and ability as gifts which a man receives from the divine hand, but when it comes to money—well, a man works for that, he deserves it, and has a right to use it as he thinks fit. But is there any man who really believes this? Be honest with yourself. Don't you know of far better men than you are, who are finding life a struggle? Be frank enough to see that your money is God's gift, and that your possession of it is that of a steward who must continually refer to his master. You are not a principal, you are only an agent" (F. L. Boyd).

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

A shop girl wrote to Dr. Cadman asking why a respectable girl of decent parentage who works for her living is reckoned the inferior of the well-dressed flapper.

In answer, Dr. Cadman told her to take the flapper to her heart and remember that "the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady are sisters under the skin." And he further said:

"There is always a hopeful remnant in every grade of society which must not be judged by appearances. Girls and women who render needed service to society and translate life into deeds of good will are found in mansions and tenements alike. They may seem far removed from each other by circumstances, but they are one in spirit, and that spirit is the best antidote for the bane of caste snobbery.

"Align yourself with them, dream their dreams, hope their hopes, share their aspirations, sustain their efforts. Deem yourself essential to the realization of a social fabric which accepts people for what they are and not for what they assert themselves to be. This way lies your own freedom from class consciousness.

"We all need to forget that we are fenced off into groups and to remember that we are one family. The flapper belongs to it, so does the working girl, and so do the frivolous queens of fashion whose secret thoughts could not endure exposure, as well as the wives and mothers who make the world go round."

"There is no respect of persons with him," wrote Paul to the Ephesians. Let

this thought be active in your mind in all class discussions of "servants" and "masters," of employed and employer.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

THE GOLDEN RULE IN THE WORK OF THE WORLD

Beginning the Lesson

Do you know the fate of the Shoeless Town, as told by Mark Guy Pearse? There were beautiful buildings in this town, erected on its best sites for the purpose of affording places where lectures might be given on the beauty of shoes, but in its streets were crowds of men and women who walked with bleeding feet, for it had not occurred to them to make use of shoes! There are men and women today who, like those of Shoeless Town, fail to make practical use of what they know to be beautiful. They will listen to lectures upon the Golden Rule and will signify their approval of it, but the last thing they think of is to apply it in doing their part of the work of the world.

Adam Clarke, the Biblical commentator, says of the Golden Rule that it is the sum of all that is laid down in the sacred writings relative to men's conduct toward one another. Our texts deal with this question: first of the relation between servants and masters, and then of the relation of the rich to those less happily endowed with riches.

With Good Will Doing Service

A great many persons exercise their ingenuity or use their power to avoid doing their fair share of work in the world. If the millennium ever comes on this earth, it will be when everyone does cheerfully and with all his strength the kind of work for which his talents fit him, and is fairly and honestly paid therefor.

How many hours a day should a man or a woman work? Almost everyone will say at once that the question is absurd, for there is no rule that can be applied generally either to men or to women.

Nevertheless, it is easy to see that the trade unions think otherwise; for no matter what union it is, it fixes upon a certain number of hours as the maximum for those who belong to it. There is no elasticity; no liberty for those who are strong and capable to exceed the limit, which in many cases is fixed below the capacity of the weakest and the most inefficient.

At the present time there are movements in many countries to shorten the hours of labor. An eight-hour day is beginning to look conservative. Even before it has been attained, some of the trades are demanding a forty-four-hour week, and the more radical labor men are talking about a working time of six hours a day for five days in the week—a thirty-hour week.

Men who are dissatisfied with their lot, and who yet suffer themselves to be bound by rules that forbid them to work more than a certain number of hours a day, might ask themselves if they know or ever heard of a man who limited himself by such a rule and yet rose out of his condition and gained wealth. The careers of many successful men show that the contrary is true. Would those men, or would any of the lesser men who have raised themselves out of poverty, have succeeded if they had intrusted to others the right to tell them to stop work when others stopped?

Trade unions have undoubtedly improved the condition of working men and women. They are wise in organizing for self-protection. They are to be commended for all the good they have done; nor is it to be denied that reducing the hours of labor has been greatly beneficial. But making it compulsory for every man to limit the time that he may work is not beneficial to all. So far as it induces indolence on the part of those who are capable of rising, and so far as it stifles proper ambition, it is harmful.—The Youth's Companion.

The Golden Rule in Business

When Lord Leverhulme met the mayor and aldermen of Toronto in order to submit his proposal for acquiring the site on which the Canadian factory of Lever Brothers now stands, the question of a possible concession with regard to taxation was mentioned to him. "Will you give the same exemption to John Taylor?" he inquired, John Taylor being a Canadian soap-maker with works in the same vicinity. They replied that it was unnecessary, as Taylor was already established. "Then I do not ask," said Lever, "and will not accept any favors or advantages that will not be

equally shared in by other Toronto soapmakers. All I want to know is the approximate amount of my taxes for the next ten years, and whether the Council will put in a condition fit for public use the street leading to our works."

Christianity in Business Life

Men are asking everywhere this question: "Is it possible for a man to be engaged in the activities of our modern life, and yet be a Christian? Is it possible for a man to be a broker, a shopkeeper, a lawyer, a mechanic—is it possible for a man to be in a business of today and yet love his God and his fellow-man as himself?" I do not know what transformations these dear businesses of yours must undergo before they shall be true and ideal homes for the child of God, but I do know that upon Christian merchants and Christian brokers and Christian lawyers and Christian men in business today there rests an awful and a beautiful responsibility to prove—if you can prove it—that these things are capable of being made divine; to prove that a man can do the work which you have been doing this morning, and will do this afternoon, and yet shall love his God and his fellow-man as himself. If he cannot, what business have you to be doing them? If he can, what business have you to be doing them so poorly, carnally and unspiritually that men look on them and shake their heads with doubt? It belongs to Christian men, first, to prove that man may be a Christian and yet do business; and, in the second place, to show how a man, as he becomes a greater Christian, shall purify and lift the business which he does and make it the worthy occupation of the son of God.—Phillips Brooks.

Judge Gary and Christian Ideals in Business

Judge Gary was a great financial manager. He was less a captain of industry than a corporation diplomat. He managed corporation financial affairs rather than the production of steel. His mind was judicial, his bearing always genial; he wore the velvet glove over a hand as firm as steel.

He is supposed to have coined the term "a corporation with a soul," and his adulators have held up his great steel company as an example of such a corporation. Millions were spent on safety devices and welfare work. On that alone hung the claim that the steel trust was a corporation with a soul. The twelve-hour day and the seven-day week increased while welfare work increased, and were abandoned only after the interchurch report had mobilized public opinion against them. Even then the judge said he was not convinced that they were wrong. He only yielded to "stop the mouths of the demagogues." The old arbitrary system of labor control remains.

There was no democracy in Judge Gary's industrial philosophy. To him money was power, religion was personal, *laissez faire* was God-made, and profit was the primary motive in all material enterprise. He was, perhaps, the ablest of the old captains of corporation finance and commerce; at least, he was the most famous.

The challenge we bring to his type of business is that it does not consciously devote itself to the service of humanity. Its frank professions of motive are those of profit for self. It may make an argument to the effect that it does, in the end, serve humanity, but such service is not the direct personal aim of the man in business; his personal motive is that of profit for himself.

The *laissez faire* theory still prevails in such business ethics. It teaches that when each of us seeks his own it will somehow come out best for all of us. Finding that historically men had always sought each his own in the world of affairs, the economists of yesterday reasoned that such was the law of business enterprise. They gave no hostage to that ethical culture which seeks to guide the minds and motives of men into conscious moral control of the world of affairs.

The dominating motive in business for profit first is still the age-long law of the jungle, modified by the amenities of culture and civilization. The very process of Christianizing society is that of converting the jungle law of self-seeking into the Christian law of service. Struggle for self is the law of the jungle, "red in tooth and claw," and ruthless competition is its method. Where "competition is the law of trade," jungle law dominates. It may be modified to fit human affairs, to be sure, and refined by a civilization that lifts the man above the beast. But it is still the jungle law with a grim "survival of the fit," based on strength, strategy and the wit to win.

In so far as Christian teaching is applied to business, the law of competition will be modified by coöperative methods, for Christianity is a religion of brotherhood, and brotherhood implies coöperation and fellow service. Competition will be reduced

to that emulation which brings out the best in each of us, while coöperation Christianizes the whole big game. That day is coming and a new type of industrial and business leader is in the offing. Judge Gary was, we devoutly hope, the last of the Napoleons of his particular kind. The great manager of corporate industrial enterprises tomorrow will put another "o" in corporation; he will be more an industrial democrat and less a corporation monarch.—Condensed from an Editorial in The Christian Century.

A Pledge for Business People Suggested by A. J. Bessinger

Be it known unto all people that the management of this place of business, legally known as ————, together with all those of our employees whose names appear below, are endeavoring to use the Golden Rule in our relations to one another, to our customers, to other business firms, and to the general public. We invite all who may have dealings with us which they believe to be out of accord with the Golden Rule to notify us so that the matter may be corrected. We believe we are following the Golden Rule by inviting our employees, customers, and the general public to use the same Rule in their dealings with us. We will also help each other to study, understand, and to keep the Rule.

Where the Golden Rule is Kept in Business

Mr. Steiner tells of dining at the home of a rich steel magnate in St. Louis. There were present the President, Vice-President, General Manager, and other heads of a great corporation. For grace they all took hold of hands around the table and said: "We now pledge ourselves to do this day and every day unto others as we would have them do to us." "Their men do not strike," commented Mr. Steiner.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. Is R. S. MacArthur right when he declares that if a man cannot take his religion into his business, he must have a very bad business or a very poor religion?

2. What is Christian socialism?

3. Religion and business. See The Ethics of Business, by E. L. Heermance; Social Control of Business, by J. M. Clark; Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, by R. H. Tawney.

4. What your church can do in industrial relations. See five cent manuscript with this title, published by The Federal Council of the Churches, 105 East 22d St., New York City.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. Are we keeping the child in the center of the picture? 2. "The child in a Christian world"; are we doing all we can to have the children of the world treated in a Christian spirit? 3. What responsibility has our church for the care of the children of the poor? 4. If Christ had not come, what would the world today be? 5. How can peace among men, international peace, be best advanced in the coming year?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

FAIR PLAY IN THE DAY'S WORK

Beginning the Lesson

Here is an interesting story told by Professor Jerome Davis:

A man went to a ball held by a deaf and dumb organization. Wishing to get a partner for a dance, he asked a friend how to do so, as he did not know their language. He was told to approach a young woman with his arm extended and a smile on his face. He did this, and was successful. He enjoyed the dance with the young woman very much, and danced with her a second time, until a young man burst in with the protest, "Ruth, when are you going to dance with me?" And the young woman replied, "As soon as I can get rid of this deaf and dumb idiot."

Professor Davis told his story to illustrate his thought that there is need of a better understanding between various groups. People who are not deaf and dumb make a somewhat similar mistake because they fail to see that their interests are the same, as they would do if they would frankly speak the same language and understand one another.

What does our text from Deuteronomy say about the employer's treatment of the employed? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

Apply the Golden Rule to your Work

The Golden Rule is, "Do as you would be done by," or "Put yourself in his place." This is a great principle that gives the key to success in all our dealings with people. It applies to the family, the school and the playground, quite as much as to the church.

And it is the most important thing in the world when it comes to the business of one employed by another. All the labor troubles, strikes and their consequent misery, would be avoided if employer and employee had sense enough to put himself steadily in the other's place.

Two opposing selfishnesses can never work together without clash. When unselfishness meets unselfishness, that is the ideal condition. First of all, therefore, lay it to your heart, and get it deep set in your mind, that your employer's interests are your own.

If you are employed on a farm, take as much interest in anything that pertains to it as if it were your farm. Pick up a stray board, stop a leak, repair a lock, cover exposed machinery, and look after anything that falls to your notice, just as the farmer himself would do.

If you are a clerk in a store, get the thought in your mind that it is your store, and be as anxious as the proprietor to keep things neat, to attract customers and to avoid losses.

You have something better than wages to work for, always; it is yourself, for your future. You owe it to your best self to be loyal, to give the best that is in you. You are, in a way, a partner in the concern.—Frank Crane.

A Square Deal for Capital and Labor

Among the questions discussed in a Church School near New York (Englewood, N. J.) was the subject of the fair treatment of employed. Dr. T. H. P. Sailer reports the discussion in Religious Education:

Mary said she could not see why working people were not more contented. They would be if the agitators would only let them alone. They ought to be happy enough to find steady work. Everyone said they were getting more than they ever did before. If they did not like their jobs they ought to quit peaceably without making any fuss. Instead of this, they formed unions to dictate to their employers and to prevent them from hiring other men. Employers and workers ought both to be perfectly free to do as they chose. Workingmen tried to get as much wages as they could and give as little time as possible. They had no business to want what they did not fairly earn. They ought to trust their employers to pay them fair wages.

Tom said that working people had to look out for themselves because no one else would do it for them. He thought it was very natural for them to want all they could get. They formed unions in order to protect each other and to deal with employers on more equal terms. It was no worse for them to want shorter hours and more pay than for employers to want longer hours from them with less pay.

The following questions were then discussed:

1. Which of Mary's arguments do you think were good, and which of Tom's?
2. Have working people any right to be discontented? Why, or why not?
3. Would everybody be happy if wealth were equally distributed?
4. Why should we discuss subjects like this in the church school?

This discussion was followed by an entire session spent in reading aloud from The Workers, by Walter A. Wyckoff, to make vivid the experiences of an unskilled worker.

"God!"

Fred S. Goodman relates an incident which is of wonderful impressiveness as illustrating the vital reality of the presence and interest of God in the affairs of men, and the absolute safety and profit of reckoning him in in all the plans and purposes of life. It is not a "stock story," but a bit of real life, and Mr. Goodman got it directly from the man most intimately concerned.

Some years ago, seventeen men who were engaged in the packing business set

sail from New York to Europe, purposing while on the way to organize what has since been known as the "beef trust," and which has been the subject of so much investigation and prosecution by the government. They carefully wrought out the details of an agreement into which it was proposed to enter for the control of the meat supply. When it was all done the question was whether all would agree to enter upon the arrangement. One man, a packer from the middle West, said that his wife was a partner with him in all his undertakings, and he could not answer until he had consulted her.

Upon the arrival of the ship in England, he immediately took passage back to America to talk over the matter with her. He laid it all before her, and for several days they discussed it before coming to a conclusion, he doing most of the talking, she thinking. Finally, Sunday night arrived, and the answer had to go across the water the next day. Once more he went over the matter, and there was silence for a moment, when the wife said, "Tom, you can't do it!" "Why?" he inquired. Solemnly she uttered one word, "God!" That decided the matter. Back of that one word was all of their conception of God and his requirements of those who professed to be his children.

The next day he wired his refusal, though he knew it would probably result in the ruin of his business, for the allied packers would wage a relentless war against him. It began very soon. Prices were cut, rebates demanded from railroads, and every means possible taken to destroy his business. Trade went down and down and down, until ruin stared him in the face. At last the time came when it seemed that he must put a twenty-thousand-dollar mortgage on his home. But while he was considering the mortgage, which he knew would hurt his credit, especially in his own community, a friend who was the general agent of a great insurance company in which he had a large policy which would mature soon, came to him and said that money was overabundant with the company, and if he would like, the company would be glad to pay him in advance a considerable portion of his accrued policy.

He did not tell his friend the joy that filled his heart at the proposition, but calmly accepted it. It relieved the situation for the present; and then the tide of business turned. Men learned that the meats from that packing house were of the very finest quality. Business grew, and from one packing-house there have come to be two branches. Men willingly pay a little higher price for that meat than they do for other meats, and prosperity has come to him, his home and his business.

Some time ago the government was prosecuting the beef trust, and this particular packer was summoned as a witness. Attorney-General Knox asked him the pointed question, "How much rebate did you get from the railroads last year?" "Not a dollar," he replied. The answer was so amazing that Mr. Knox thought he was joking, and warned him that the matter was not one to be joked on, repeated the question with strong emphasis. Straightening his shoulders, and throwing back his head, he looked the prosecutor straight in the face and replied: "Not a dollar. I have never received a dollar rebate in my life."

At once he was excused from the witness stand, and as he went out one of the other packers took him by the hand and said, "I would give a million dollars to be able to say what you did today."

And it all came through the mighty power of the one word—"God." Mr. Goodman used this illustration in emphasizing the fact that we should not only study the Bible, but apply it.—Zion's Advocate.

Sentence Sermons

Whatever line of business a Christian works in, he must work in it as a Christian.—James Denney.

Religion is not a strange or added thing, but the inspiration of the secular life, the breathing of an eternal spirit through this temporal world.—Henry Drummond.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. How many stories have we in the Gospels about the brith of Christ? 2. In which Gospel is the story about the shepherds? 3. In which Gospel is the story about the wise men? 4. How was each group led to the Babe? 5. What does Christmas mean to you? 6. What are you doing this year to make Christmas happy for others?

THE CHILD IN A CHRISTIAN WORLD (CHRISTMAS LESSON)

GOLDEN TEXT: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 19.14

LESSON Matthew 18.1-6; Mark 9.36, 37, 42; 10.13-16; Luke 2.1-20
DEVOTIONAL READING Isaiah 11.1-9

LUKE 2.8 And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. 9 And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: 11 for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this is the sign unto you; Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.

15 And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. 16 And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child. 18 And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE BIRTH OF JESUS AT BETHLEHEM, verses 1-7. Mary and Joseph left their home in Nazareth and went to Bethlehem, which had been the home of their ancestor David, in order to be enrolled in "their own city," as Cæsar Augustus had decreed. It is eighty miles from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, and the journey must have taken them several days. There in Bethlehem Jesus was born, and Mary laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn. The so-called Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is built over the traditional site of the manger.

"The first simple, broad, pervading sentiment of Christmas Day ought to be of how sacred and high this human life is into which the Lord was born" (Phillips Brooks).

II. THE SHEPHERDS AND THE ANGELS, verses 8-14. In this beautiful story we are told that as shepherds were watching their flock by night in the field, an angel suddenly stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. The angel bade them fear not, for he was bringing them good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people. And this was the good tidings: "There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." "He does not simply say, Christ is born, but to you he is born," Luther points out; "neither does he say, I bring glad tidings but, To you I bring glad tidings of great joy. Furthermore, this joy was not to remain in them, but it was to be to all people."

"There is much which we do not know about the angels. But two very wonderful things we do know. One is that they represented some of the glory of heaven made visible. The other thing is that they represented the message of heaven made articulate. The unseen found its way to the human eye. The unheard found its way to the human ear. And we know enough to be quite sure that in a very real sense heaven is all the while trying to become visible to mortal eyes and audible to human ears. We may think of the angels as representing the wistfulness of heaven bending eagerly over an earth which is strangely and pathetically slow to understand.

"Only hearts which welcome angelic thoughts can hear angelic voices."

"And this is the sign unto you": the sign was the unexpected circumstance of the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, cradled in a manger. The swaddling clothes

were the bands of cloth that the eastern mother wraps tightly around the body of her babe, confining legs and arms.

Suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host appeared and praised God, saying, "Glory to God in the highest (in Latin, *Gloria in excelsis,* as the hymn is called which dates from the second century), and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased."

"Glory to God; good will to men!
Come! Feel it, show it, live it, then."

III. THE SHEPHERDS AND THE BABE, verses 15-20. When the angels departed the amazed shepherds said to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has made known to us." They were astonished at the message that had come to them, but they were not incredulous. They went in haste, and found the holy family. To Mary and Joseph they told what they had heard concerning the Babe. All marveled, and Mary retained their words in her heart, pondering them over and over.

The shepherds returned to their humble task of keeping their flock, an outburst of praise upon their lips:

"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased."

"We come with willing feet to thy house, Almighty God, that we may give thee thanks for the inestimable gift of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. We would bow down in adoration with the believers of many ages and centuries, who have found in him light and life, the wisdom that illumines the mind and the supreme example which discloses the paths of holy conduct."

LIGHT FROM ORIENTAL LIFE

She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, verse 7. According to general Syrian custom, in earliest infancy a child is not really clothed, it is only swaddled. The infant is washed, then salted, or rubbed gently with salt pulverized in a stone mortar especially for the occasion, sprinkled with rehan—a powder made of dried myrtle leaves—and then swaddled. The swaddle is a piece of stout cloth about a yard

Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem

square, to one corner of which is attached a long narrow band. The infant, with its arms pressed close to its sides, and its feet stretched full length and laid close together, is wrapped in the swaddle, and the narrow band wound around the little body, from the shoulders to the ankles, giving the little one the exact appearance of an Egyption mummy.—Abraham Mitrie Rihbany, in The Atlantic Monthly.

Let us go unto Bethlehem, verse 15. On the anniversary of Christ's birth, in the town where he was born, the Latins, the Greeks, and the Armenians hold their services in the Church of the Nativity. The Latin celebration begins at eleven in the evening and lasts nearly all night. Men, women, and children sit upon the marble floor and listen to the music of monks and priests, and watch the passing

to and fro of the bishops and archbishops attired in glittering robes embroidered with gold and silver. At midnight there is silence while the bells peal forth the hour, and then as the "Gloria in Excelsis" is exultantly sung, a curtain is drawn aside and from above the chancel a little silver cradle containing a wax image of the Babe is reverently lowered to be carried at the head of the procession to the Chapel of the Manger below the church. All the bishops and archbishops follow, behind them the consuls from Jerusalem in their official costumes, the long rows of chanting priests, two by two, and finally the members of the congregation, all carrying lighted tapers. Near the foot of the flight of steps is a marble slab, and in the center of it a large brass star bearing the inscription: *Hic de Maria Jesus Natus Est* (Here Jesus was born of Mary). On an altar above a manger the little silver cradle is laid, where it remains during the week of Christmas. Incense is burned continually, and the many lamps in the room, each the gift of a king, are never allowed to go out.

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

CHRISTIAN OBLIGATIONS TO CHILDHOOD

Beginning the Lesson

Our thoughts today turn to Christmas stories, and consequently to the best Christmas story ever written. It has been the inspiration of all Christmas stories. An object lesson for writers and critics of all time, it is only a little over four hundred words long. If it were written today it would undoubtedly be expanded into a full-length novel.

It is written directly and simply. If it were written today it would be buried under the conscious effort of an artist to be poetic or tragic or epic. It bears an under-surge of strong and rhythmic melody. If it were written today it would in all likelihood be nervous and explosive, in short staccato sentences, or saccharine in the mellifluous glibness of elaborate circumlocution. It would be either of a conservative or of a radical school. It is actually of no school.

It has all the color of a beautiful language; it moves effortless and yet with the quickness of life; it is poetry in the completest sense. "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." The kindness of the sentence and the rich knowledge of life in its simplicity! But we race too much. We have in mind to creep upon the story entire, not to quote it piecemeal. It is not written subjectively; there are no passages of fetid introspection; no preoccupation with detail, which is generally supposed to mean realism; no tricks in sentence structure, no perversity in spirit or form, no attempt at sex symbolism, no psychoanalysis,—none the less, the picture is the stuff of life.

It is not because of any notion or sentiment that we find it to be the greatest Christmas story ever written. The facts are indisputable: it was the first Christmas story, and, in spite of new schools of literature, it still lives.—The Literary Review.

The Festival of the Home

The father, the mother, the Child—this is the divine trinity in unity in human life; and Christmas is thus peculiarly the Festival of the Home. From a hundred cities children will hasten back on Christmas Day to the old home, bearing gifts in their hands, to recount their adventures, to renew childish memories, to talk over old scenes and experiences.

> The sailor is back from the sea
> And the hunter home from the hill.

And from these recovered and deepened intimacies who can estimate what good will follow, what new reverence for parents and appreciation of their sacrifices, what a comforting assurance that amid all the wide wanderings of life there is an ultimate anchorage in the old home? I see myself, as a small boy, coming home from a distant school, with such a tumult of anticipation in my heart that I was all but speechless with emotion when I arrived. I see my mother standing in the doorway, and the bright fire blazing on the hearth, and the walls of each room decorated with holly and mistletoe, and the easily checkmated guile with which presents were concealed, and the innocent gluttony with which the Christmas meal was approached; and I feel again the sense of common life suddenly irradiated by a new and joyous spirit which made Christmas Day the one day of all the year for which one lived.

I am not sure that folk feel quite in this way now, when families so often eat their Christmas dinner in hotels and restaurants. I am not sure that the sentiment

of Christmas as the Festival of the Home is so deep as it once was; in our devotion to the practical we have become a little cold to emotional habits and occasions. All the more reason, then, for us to recollect that the Christmas spirit is above all things a domestic spirit. When the home decays, what wonder that religion languishes and crime increases? The divinest thing in human life is family affection, and when we turn our eyes toward Bethlehem, it is to gaze upon a family, the beautiful human trinity of the father, mother and the Child.—From a Sermon by W. J. Dawson.

The Child at the Center of the Picture

Christmas puts the child at the center of the picture, and that is one of the great achievements of Christmas for the world.

The shrewd old men and the brave young men give place for the time to the shining eyes of the little babies who have the whole adventure of living yet before them. It would be good for us all if we could keep the child in the center of the picture and decide all our problems in the light of its innocent, hopeful eyes. Homes are never broken as long as the child is kept in the center of the picture. The selfish thoughts and actions that invade the peace of the home become impossible as long as the little children have their rightful place in the heart of the father and the heart of the mother. Education becomes a noble and productive thing when the child is really at the center of our thought, and we plan processes of training which will give it the largest and fullest life.

The church is the noblest sort of institution when the child is kept in the center of the picture, when all its officials and members are remembering that the church must be a good place for little children as they are growing up. Then no end of things do not happen which might otherwise happen, and many things do come to pass which otherwise would never occur. Commerce and statecraft have new qualities when great problems are decided by men and women who remember that the world must be made and kept a good world for little children. Our eyes have a new clarity, and our conscience has a new discernment if the childhood of the world has a place deep in the center of our devotion.

It is a great thing for us all, then, that once a year, through the influence of one glorious Baby, the child is put at the center of the picture. It would be best of all if we kept the child at the center of the picture throughout the year.—Lynn Harold Hough.

A New Reverence for Childhood

Ever since that day when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the world has had a new reverence for childhood and motherhood. And we have also learned a new reverence for human nature itself. The huts where poor men lie have become sacred. We are prepared to find our heroes there. And we have in these obscure Bethlehems of the humble and unconsidered those who have become, like Lincoln, the Saviors of their nation in the hour of peril. Bethlehem is thus the symbol of God's presence wherever man is found.

The reverence for childhood and motherhood is the key to a nation's greatness. That nation will abide longest in which are the best mothers, and the divinest children. Bethlehem has taught us that; and if we come to this Christmas Day with a clearer perception of the divine that is hidden in the human, with a kindlier and sweeter spirit towards the poor, with a wiser vision of our duties to childhood, and of the honor due to motherhood, we shall be in the true spirit of Christmas, whose age-long promise is Peace on Earth and Good Will towards Men.—W. J. Dawson.

The Parent's Opportunity

To have a little life put into your hands, to be with that little life by day and by night, to shape it, not so much by what you consciously say as by what you are unconsciously in all your influence, example, and life,—what an opportunity is this! We receive this little child as a great opportunity to do a part of God's work in the world. What God is doing in this world is making men and women, and when he puts a child in the cradle he says, You may help me.

The child is a beam of sunlight from the Infinite and Eternal; with possibilities both of virtue and vice—but as yet unstained. . . . Every life is a march from innocence, through temptation, to virtue or to vice. There is no way in which virtue can be won save by battle; there is no way in which battle can be fought without possibility of defeat. And so in this babe there is neither virtue nor vice. Not courage yet, nor truth, nor purity, nor love, nor faith; but the possibility of all.

Troubled mother, do you not know that this little child is God's child? and that you are God's servant? Do you not know that you are no pilot, but only the helmsman, and that God is the Pilot who tells you how to steer?—Lyman Abbott, in Problems of Life.

What is the Christian Obligation to Children of the Slums?

Did I tell you of my friend whose house stands in a garden with a sand heap in which the children dig and romp with their cat and the kittens and the terrier dog? Of how the dog will try to smother a kitten now and then in an opportune sand-hole, with the children ever on the watch to avert the threatened catastrophe? And of how they did avert it, until one unlucky day they found a dead kitten in the sand heap. Whereupon the little girl rushed into her mother's presence with it in her apron and cried out indignantly:

"There, mamma, a perfectly good cat spoiled!"

Just so with these children of the tenement. Perfectly good, as good as any on the avenue with the brown-stone mansions, they are spoiled in the tenement slum, and the loss is ours, our irreparable loss.—Jacob Riis.

A Prayer for Children who Work

O thou great Father of the weak, lay thy hand tenderly on all the little children on earth and bless them. Bless our own children who are the life of our life, and who have become the heart of our heart. Bless every little child-friend who has leaned against our knee, and refreshed our soul by its smiling trustfulness. Be good to all children who crave in vain for human love or for flowers and water, and the sweet breast of Nature. But bless with a three-fold blessing the young lives whose slender shoulders are already bowed beneath the yoke of toil, and whose glad growth is being stunted forever. Let not their little bodies be utterly sapped and their minds given over to stupidity and the vices of an empty soul. We have all jointly deserved the millstone of thy wrath for making these little ones to stumble and fall. Grant all employers of labor stout hearts to refuse enrichment at such a price. Grant to all the citizens and officers of States which now permit this wrong the grace of holy anger. Help us to realize that every child in our nation is in very truth our child, a member of our great family. Save us, we beseech thee, from killing the sweetness of young life by the greed of gain.—Walter Rauschenbusch, in The American Magazine.

For Bible Class Discussion

1. When every child is reverenced as a royal heir of heaven because it is a brother of the Christ-child, then the Epiphany will come, and a great light will lighten nations.—Henry van Dyke. The last and the worst thing that can be said of a nation is that it has made its children sad and weary.—Ruskin.

2. Every boy is potentially great. He has something in him more powerful than dynamite. It will either find self-expression or self-explosion. Your obligation is to direct that power and set it off in the direction of good citizenship.—Harry Collins Spillman.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What is the root-meaning of the word worship? 2. Is worship a duty? Is it a necessity? 3. Is it disconnected from our daily living? 4. What is the gain to be derived from worshiping with others? 5. What can we do to make our worship more truly Christian? 6. Are our church services as well attended as they should be? 7. If not, what can we do about it? 8. If you are not glad on Sunday morning that yours is the opportunity of going to the house of Jehovah, wherein lies the trouble?

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS

FINDING AND FOLLOWING THE RIGHT LEADER

Beginning the Lesson

If you should look up the word Christmas in Webster's dictionary, you would come across the surprising statement that "Christmas is an annual festival and in some States a legal holiday, in memory of the birth of Christ." It is now a legal holiday in all our States and territories, but it was not at the time Webster's dictionary was written. When our country was new, the Dutch who settled in New

York and Pennsylvania, the English who settled in Virginia, and the French and the Spaniards still farther south, kept Christmas, but the Pilgrims in New England did not. How did the Shepherds keep that first Christmas day?

A Christmas Welcome

The Child born in the stable of Bethlehem, "because there was no room for them in the inn," was heralded by angels to the shepherds and by a star to the wise men; but no voice told the women of Bethlehem of the wonder that was happening in their town that night.

Suppose some gentle woman had met Joseph and Mary on that Wonderful Day, as they entered the town and had said to them, "Our streets are full of homeless strangers. Come you and bide with me!" By that simple act of hospitality, her name would have been written high, high among the names of earth's happiest folk. "Blessed is she," we should have cried, "to whose home the Christmas joy first came!" But the women of the Judean town did not throw wide their doors and bring in the world's gratitude and love. So the Child was laid in a manger, and oblivion holds the names of all the women in Bethlehem who slept that night beneath the wings of wondering angels. Had they but known!

Year by year, for nineteen centuries the story of the night at Bethlehem has been told and retold. Today no household in Christendom, in town or village or on distant prairie can plead the ignorance in which Bethlehem then lay. If the door is shut on the Christ-child today, it is not from lack of knowledge, but from churlishness or indifference.

The Christmas spirit speaks in many voices. The sprig of holly or the plum pudding, the tree laden with gifts or the cheer for the lonely—these are all the world's way of saying to the Mother and the Holy Child, "Abide with us!"

Barred out alike from cottage and palace and inn in Palestine, the Hope of the World renews his appeal each Christmas-tide to our modern Christian world. By the very pathos of the first Christmas, the heart is softened and prepared to give him welcome. Today there is no heralding angel or guiding star.

No ear may hear his coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still,
The dear Christ enters in.—The Youth's Companion.

A Legend from the Norse

An old legend tells that among those strong, stalwart shepherds who went to Bethlehem at the angel's bidding to see the Holy Babe lying in his manger there was one little boy. When they entered the stable the men pressed forward, so that the boy could see nothing, even though in his eagerness he raised himself on the very tips of his toes. Presently Mary noticed him and drew him forward kindly to where the Child Jesus lay. Then the little shepherd knelt down beside the crib, and gazed long and earnestly with those large eyes which we only see in children. And then he thought he would like to give some present; but he was barelegged and had nothing on his sunburnt little body except a camel's-hair tunic.

He stood there wondering sadly what he should do. All of a sudden he remembered the flute which he held tightly clasped in his hand. It was his one and only toy, and he loved it dearly and played so happily with it as he wandered with his flock along the hillside.

It did not take long to decide. Yes, he would give his flute. First, however, he must play a little for the Child in the manger. So he began to play—and as he played an echo of angelic choirs seemed to float upon the air around. The melody commenced with faltering notes as of one in sorrow and need; then succeeded tones mild and gentle as the love of God on high; and it ended with joyful notes, telling of perfect peace.

The lad stopped playing, and held out the flute to the Child in the manger, shyly, as though he would say, "Do not disdain it." Then Jesus stretched out his arms to him and smiled, and it is said that this was Jesus' first smile upon earth. The legend goes on to say that when Jesus himself grew older he, too, began to play upon the shepherd lad's flute melodies which went straight to men's hearts and made them weep, now with tears of penitence, now with tears of joy, but most often of all with deep longing to become better men and walk uprightly in God's way.—Bible Society Gleanings.

JESUS BLESSING THE CHILDREN (*JULIAAN DE VRIENDT*)

"Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven.—Matthew 19. 14

Seeking and Finding the Savior

"There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night." How familiar and how full of rich association these old words have grown! Try to think what their story must mean, what contribution it makes to the symphony of meaning in which all these attendants on the birth of Christ unite. Remember what is told us. They heard a song of angels, a voice from heaven telling them that a Savior was born in Bethlehem, and that glory had come to God and peace had come to men. Then they simply stand looking at one another, as if in dumb wonder. Then they can only say to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this strange thing." Then they come and find Christ, and then they go abroad to tell other men about him. That is all. There is a certain dumb, blind movement about all they do, yet with a certain simple, eager straightforwardness about it. They sing no psalm like Mary. They do not follow the star nor go to Herod like the wise men. They simply hear a voice from heaven telling them that there is a Savior and where he is, and they say, "Let us go there."

There will be many whose whole experience will be merely this: that, hungry, needy, empty, wanting a Savior, they just heard a voice from heaven telling them that the Savior whom they needed had come, and they just went to him and found him all they wanted, and then, like the poor shepherds, "made known abroad" to other men all that had come to them. No doubt in their experience, simple as they seem, the whole richness of those others will really be included. But to the multitude of human souls Christ will be simply the Savior revealed from heaven, and they will turn to him almost as a creature shut up in the dark turns without thought, without plan or anticipation, to any corner of its darkness where a bright light suddenly shines.—Phillips Brooks, Sermons.

Finding and Following the Savior

Harold F. Carr illustrates the truth that the following must be persisted in by means of three sheets of white paper, with carbon paper between each two. Then he asks you to color the first page red, and see what has happened to the other two pages. You will find the second page black, and the third page just smudgy. "Some people meet Jesus and expect to be good just because they have met him, without doing anything more. But they find that they must meet him often, and must pray regularly to be good. If they try to be good on the strength they have received the first day of coming to him, the second day is just a carbon copy of the first, not even the same healthy color. And if prayer and thought of Jesus is neglected long, the days are just poor, smudgy days, very unlike the first day."

Our Christmas Prayer

Help us rightly to remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the Wise Men. Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing that Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clean hearts. May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thought, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake, Amen.—Robert Louis Stevenson.

Sentence Sermons

Each heart may to the manger go,
Each soul may to the sweet Babe cling,
Each voice may whisper, sweet and low,
"Jesus, my king."—L. J. Sanderson.

Be it our endeavor,
Be we great or small,
To be like this dear Christ Child—
Kind to one and all.—Old Rhyme.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What does the Psalmist say in the eighty-fourth Psalm about his longing for the temple worship? 2. What does Ps. 100.4 say? 3. What does Ps. 122 say? 4. What counsel does Heb. 10.25 give in regard to public worship? 5. When did Jesus make his first visit to the temple, and what did he then say about his duty there? 6. What was Jesus' custom in regard to public worship? (Lk. 4.16.) 7. Why should we go to church? 8. What part should we take in the church services?

LESSON XIII—DECEMBER 29

FELLOWSHIP THROUGH WORSHIP

GOLDEN TEXT: He entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day. Luke 4.16

LESSON Nehemiah 8.1-12; Micah 4.1, 2; Psalm 122.1-9; Matthew 28.18-20; Hebrews 10:19-25 DEVOTIONAL READING Revelation 7:9-17

PSALM 122.1 I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go unto the house of Jehovah.
2 Our feet are standing
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem,
3 Jerusalem, that art builded
As a city that is compact together;
4 Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of Jehovah,
For an ordinance of Israel,
To give thanks unto the name of Jehovah.
5 For there are set thrones for judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.
6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
They shall prosper that love thee.
7 Peace be within thy walls,
And prosperity within thy palaces.
8 For my brethren and companions' sakes,
I will now say, Peace be within thee.
9 For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God
I will seek thy good.

HEBREWS 10.22 Let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our body washed with pure water, 23 let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised: 24 and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting *one another;* and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.

EXPLANATIONS AND COMMENTS

I. THE JOY OF BEING IN THE MIDST OF A WORSHIPING MULTITUDE, Psalm 122. Psalms 120-134 bear each the heading "A Song of Ascents." It is thought that they were pilgrim songs sung by the Israelites on their annual pilgrimages to the Holy City at the time of religious festivals. "The exquisite gems of imagery with which these Psalms are studded add to their winsomeness—the whole collection yielding us the most pleasing impression of the simple, gracious piety of the Israel of the later ages."

Friends came to the Psalmist and invited him to make one of their party for such a pilgrimage to the temple. He recalls in this Psalm 122 the joy this invitation gave him, his delight at actually standing within the gates of Jerusalem, the Holy City so compactly built together. How he gloried in its palaces of the Davidic line of kings, its tribunals for judgment, and its sacred temple crowning all! There he meditated upon its history, upon the constant going up to it of the tribes of old in testimony of their relationship to Jehovah, to offer thanks unto him.

"There lingers in the mind the memory of an All Saints' Day vesper service years ago in Ely Cathedral. At the close of that evening service the singers came down from the choir stalls, and passed through the screen out into the gloom of the nave, singing as they went that brave, inevitable hymn of the hour, 'For all the saints, who from their labors rest.' As this recessional moved by the worshiper and it died away in the distance, the place seemed tenanted by the generations gone and the generations yet to come. The worshiper felt his part in the pilgrimage of the race. Humanity itself seemed to be passing in review and in procession. One was caught into the tide of song and swept out across the bar of solitude into the mysterious sea of racial being. That is what the life of man is, the thing they sang there that night. Such a deep and moving humanism, so utterly characteristic of a church at its best, is certainly a point of departure for all farther and braver faith, and is the ground of the church's first and simplest appeal to men. Whatever else the institution of the church may mean to man, it represents his desire to know himself as part of a vital tradition covering a history larger than that lying between the horizons of his three score years and ten" (Willard L. Sperry).

The Psalmist's heart is stirred to earnest importunity, that all shall pray for the praise and prosperity of Jerusalem. "The last four verses of the Psalm breathe a spirit of the noblest, most unselfish patriotism. Not for his own sake, but for

the sake of his brethren—the people at large—and for the sake of his God, his temple, and his service, he wishes peace to Jerusalem and calls upon others to wish her peace. With love to Israel and love to Jehovah there is naturally united a warm affection for Jerusalem, a hearty interest in her welfare" (Perowne).

The worshipers in God's temporary dwelling-place among men were by no means free of obligation. If they came thither with their prayers for his blessing, they must needs recognize their responsibility toward the maintenance of his house. If Jerusalem stood to them as the place where he dwelt, the source of their every good, they must personally undertake some share in its life. Hence this exhortation to pray for Jerusalem's peace" (J. Stuart Holden).

II. AN EXHORTATION TO AVAIL OURSELVES OF THE ACCESS TO GOD WHICH CHRIST HAS WROUGHT FOR US, Hebrews 10.22-25. After long investigating the origin of our book of Hebrews, Origen, a great scholar of the third century, decided that "God only knows who wrote it." It has been judged the most eloquent letter in the New Testament.

In chapters nine and ten the writer contrasts the old covenant with the new. The old covenant had its sacrifices and the annual entrance of the high priest into the inner chamber of the temple, the Holy of Holies, with sacrificial blood. What in former times they sought to effect by repeated animal sacrifices, Jesus had effected by the sacrifice of his own blood, offered once for all.

"In order to understand the argument, we must bear in mind that in the ritual of the Day of Atonement the sacrifice and the entrance into the sanctuary were two inseparable parts of one act. After offering sacrifice in expiation of the sins of the people, the High Priest bore the blood into the Holy of Holies to present it before God. The sacrifice itself was, in a sense, only the necessary preliminary to this priestly intercession. So in Hebrews the death of Christ is inseparably connected with his entrance into the heavenly sanctuary. He made the sacrifice of himself on behalf of his people that he might enter into God's presence with his offering, and so bring them into the true relation to God. The writer seeks to impress upon us that Christ has entered into an everlasting fellowship with God, and that we also may enjoy that fellowship through him" (Marcus Dods).

On the ground of the cleansing thus accomplished by Christ, there follow the exhortations and admonitions and encouragements of the last part of chapter ten.

Let us draw near to God in worship with a true heart, with all sincerity. "With a true heart, not with a mere bodily approach as if all were external and symbolic, but with that genuine engagement of the inner man which constitutes true worship."

In full assurance of faith, having our hearts and our bodies purified, let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised.

We gain from our hopes strength and joy in living. A life without hope would be comfortless. Lack of hope is the cause of many a one's taking his own life. Let us hold fast to our hope in Christ, for he is faithful who declared that his sheep know his voice and he knows them, and they follow him, and who promised to give them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of his hand. If we keep the commandments we shall abide in his love. He has gone to prepare a place for us, that where he is, there we may be also. Surely this is ground for hope and joy. Surely our faith should be as unwavering as his faithfulness.

And let us consider one another, "taking into account and weighing our neighbor's circumstances and especially his risks, and this with a view, not to exasperating criticism, but with a view to incite them to love and good works, acknowledging honest endeavor and making allowance for imperfection."

All Christians should have a share in this work of inciting others, by example more than by precept, not to good works alone, but to love and good works. At this Christmas season countless good works have been wrought: have they been done also with love? For only love finds its way to the hearts of men.

Let us not neglect to meet together for Christian worship, as did some, nor to exhort one another, and this the more readily, as the day is drawing near. " 'The

day' is, of course, the day of the Lord's return (9.28), the day of days. The Epistle being written in all probability a year or two before the destruction of Jerusalem, the signs of the coming day which could be 'seen' were probably the restlessness, forebodings of coming disaster, and initial collisions with the Romans which heralded the great war" (Expositor's Greek Testament).

"We need a heart which is capable of being touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We need a director of our inner life who can teach us what regimen to follow. And such a one we have in Christ, who will not shrink from the condition of our sinful hearts. He ever liveth and ever loveth" (F. B. Meyer).

A SUGGESTION TO TEACHERS

Worship is carried on through form, but forms are not worship. Worship is communion with God, in hymns of praise, in heart-felt prayers, in any and every way by which we come into the divine presence. Today we stress social worship, the meeting together in church or church school to worship, the inspirational value of "assembling ourselves together." We have an opportunity of focussing our pupils' thoughts upon the benefits of common worship, upon the feeling of dependence upon an all-powerful and all-loving Father and the realization of the real sense of his presence which it implies. Do all our church school pupils participate in public worship in the house of God?

TOPIC FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS

COMMON WORSHIP AND THE COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Beginning the Lesson

Worship is wonder. As a familiar hymn proclaims:

When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love and praise.

"What shall I render for all his benefits?" inquires the Psalmist; and the answer is, Gratitude, love, praise. It is public worship which is our direct theme today, that worship which has been defined as "Sensing the presence of the Almighty, humbling oneself before him, receiving his pardon, listening to his voice, exulting in praise and thanksgiving, planning unitedly to promote his kingdom."

What "Outside Saints" Owe the Church

Whether from the fear of man, or from apathy, it would seem that already some of the brethren to whom Hebrews is written were becoming lax in their attendance at the church assembly. Perhaps they thought that they might promote their Christian life just as well apart from these social, devotional gatherings. The writer of this Epistle warns them against the error of so thinking. He reminds them that the seasons of mutual prayer and intercourse were essential to the maintenance of their spiritual life, and that such opportunities could not be neglected without serious loss and peril. As they conversed, sang and prayed together, their love to God and to each other was stimulated, they were strengthened to meet the trials of their difficult situation, and the spirit of a holy emulation made them more abundant in noble deeds. To ignore the social privilege was to starve the soul, to sap their faith, to impoverish their character and life.

Do we not need to repeat the warning of the text in these modern days? Lately it has become quite the fashion to neglect the house of God, and to deny the need and efficacy of its services. It is confidently boasted that the best people are outside the Christian Church; they manage to live without its worship, sacraments, or fellowship. On the Sabbath day they worship in the temple made without hands, in picture galleries, or in listening to sacred music. They acknowledge no debt to the Christian faith, no obligations whatever to its public worship or social communion. On all hands it is agreed that character is largely influenced by three factors—heredity, education, and environment. How far, then, we ask, are those who disclaim the Christian Church able to abide these tests?

1. If the theory of Heredity means anything, anywhere, it must have significance here. He, then, who boasts that he has for twenty years dissociated himself

from the worshiping brotherhood must be reminded that for centuries, in a very real sense, he has been a church-goer and Bible-reader. The habits of our ancestry have deeply affected our constitution both physically and psychologically, and it is impossible in the individual lifetime to nullify the effect of ages. And it must be kept in mind that the more subtle effects of heredity are the most persistent. We come of a worshiping race, and it is just to conclude that after our forebears have for centuries cherished religious thought, responded to spiritual appeals, cultivated devotional habits, lived in the consciousness of a higher world, we have acquired a certain religious bias which it is difficult to resist, impossible to destroy. The modern sceptic may ostentatiously abjure the Christian sanctuary, and verbally deny its creed; but the spiritual essence of the discarded system has got into his brain and blood and bones, influencing him for good in many ways, whether he recognizes and obeys it or not.

Renan was the descendant of generations of pious peasants, and Daudet said of him that "his brain was like a cathedral no longer used for divine service; containing wood, trusses of straw, and miscellaneous articles, yet retaining its religious architecture." This is more or less the case with most of these outside saints. By inheritance their brain has acquired a religious architecture; and however resolutely it may be secularized, echoes of sacred music linger in the desecrated shrine.

2. Education is a recognized factor in the determination of character. What, then, we are entitled to ask, has been the nature of the education received by far the greater number of the outside saints? We say "by far the greater number," for without question the majority of them have had a distinctly religious training. They spring from religious homes, and in early life came under the influence of Christian example, in many instances being eminently favored in this respect. In the Life of her father, the intimate friend of the evangelical Wilberforce, Miss Stephen writes: "To have been my father's child was like having been brought up in a cathedral." Now, seeing that the brother was born into such a consecrated home, and trained in its hallowed exercises, it must be granted that he owed a good deal to religious nurture for whatever virtues he ultimately displayed.

3. That the Environment is largely influential in shaping character all admit. Some thinkers go very far indeed in what they impute to this external action, but we may safely concede that our surroundings give a distinctive coloring to the individual life. We claim, then, that the whole environment of these protesting unbelievers is practically Christian. It is in vain that they attempt to isolate themselves from its influence. We are told that it is impossible to exhaust an air-bell; a portion of the atmosphere still remains; and it is just as impossible to free ourselves from the contact and pressure of the Christian atmosphere which closes us in on every side. That excellent people are found outside the Church of Christ is no proof of its inefficacy, but quite the contrary; they owe the best part of all that they are to the fact that they were born in its light, that they live in its shadow.—Condensed from The Conditions of Conversion, by W. L. Watkinson.

The Community Spirit in Common Worship

We only need to think of what the social element means in the natural life. The solitary are poor creatures indeed; it is only as we enter into relations, mingle with our fellows, share the pleasures and sustain the responsibilities of the community, that we become fully developed, and know the larger meaning of life. In the higher life the social element is equally essential. It is only as we unite in prayer and praise that we realize the presence of God in a special degree. It is in the sanctuary that he is pleased to reveal himself to the sincere worshiper in extraordinary sweetness and power. In the Old Testament this fact is being perpetually dwelt upon. In the temple we are to see the divine beauty and glory as nowhere else. And in one promise the New Testament concentrates all that the Old has to tell of the glory and grace of the house of God: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18.20). There he specially welcomes his disciples, and manifests himself to them as not to the world. There, too, special illumination is vouchsafed: "When I thought how I might know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God" (Ps. 73.16, 17). As we sing, and muse, and pray, grievous doubts dissolve. Our safety is guaranteed in this constant habit of worship. The writer of this Epistle saw the peril of the believer at that particular crisis.—W. L. Watkinson.

The Value of Public Worship

The value has always lain chiefly in the fact of a common spiritual elevation. Men

feel when they are together something that they rarely and less readily feel alone. By the common impulse, all of them rise a little, if only a little, above the daily level on which otherwise each one stands. The soul, peeping out of its sordid shell, finds other souls peeping, and gets courage to peep a little farther and a little longer. That is the significance of the words, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

The individualism of the nineteenth century, so rich and fertile in many ways, had its dangerous excesses, and none more dangerous than the attitude toward public worship. Men said, "Worship is between me and God. I can find him better alone than in a tumult of those who are in no way akin to me. His dwelling is in the woods, and by the pathless waters, and among the flowers, and under the innumerable stars." So they neglected the Sunday service, and walked in the fields instead. How many of them really found God there?

It is true that the highest moments of spiritual rapture probably come in solitude. But to the finest natures they come rarely, to many not at all. Instead, men's thoughts drift too easily to things that are often lovely and of value in themselves, but wholly of this world, and in consequence they grow forgetful of anything beyond it.

Sometime, somehow, there will come a great revival of worship—not the mere formal, conventional church attendance, but the old opening of the windows of heaven to let the soul see through. It will not come through sermons only, but through common prayer, and common praise, and common adoration. Thus, and thus only, will mankind accomplish that uplifting of itself above itself that it needs more than education, more even than the widest and most substantial reformation of morals. Such uplifting is, indeed, the only substantial reformation of morals.—The Youth's Companion.

The Congregation's Part in Religious Services

Congregations frequently, perhaps usually, take some part in religious services. They join in responsive readings from Scripture, in the Lord's Prayer, in reciting the Creed, in singing hymns, and, in the Anglican or Episcopal system, in corporate prayer and communal service. The difficulty is that all these ways of worship so easily become formal and almost mechanical. They do not draw upon the deeps of the soul. They do not demand any personal effort, any first-hand creative contribution. Gladstone spoke once of "the work of worship." I do not very much like the word "work" in this connection, but in any case we ought to realize that this supreme business of life cannot be truly done when we are sliding along a groove of habit, or running through a performance which perhaps once cost the precious life blood of some ancient saint, but which costs us nothing now.

I have advisedly used the phrase "creative contribution." Something personal and original ought to well up in us and we ought to have an opportunity to make our own fresh discovery of God and to pour forth our own note of joy and adoration. Our athletics have too much degenerated into occasions where thousands of spectators sit and watch a few performers who are highly trained for the contest in which they engage. It would be much better if these spectators themselves were playing their own game and enjoying the thrill of a contest even though they were doing it less perfectly than those players whom they are watching. I feel that same way about many church services. They are well conducted, but too often everything is done for the congregation. The struggle has taken place elsewhere. They do not share in it. They only observe and listen. They have a right to be critical, for they have contributed nothing except a face to be talked to!

There is a "saying" attributed to Christ which beautifully says: "Let not him who seeks cease until he finds, and when he finds he will wonder, and wondering he will have rest." Everyone must have noticed how often the New Testament uses the word "Behold!" It is a word of wonder. Something like it is the "Selah" of the Psalms. We might almost translate it, "Think of that!" It is a throb of wonder, a sense of joy. It takes the soul away from the everlasting interrogation point and lets it feel surprise, admiration, joy and wonder. If our meetings and our services could bring us into moods and experiences like that we should throng to them and come away refreshed. If we could get in them "that sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused," we should give up our superficial pleasures and our overtime devotion to business and flock with our neighbors to what then

might properly be called "the House of God."—Rufus M. Jones, in Religious Education.

When Christian Fellowship is Missed

Various missionaries in their letters to a missionary magazine have written as follows:

"How much the magazine has meant you cannot know unless you have lived, the only foreigners, in a heathen city, and with not a touch of inspiration outside one's own home and one's own making."

"One of our greatest needs is association with people of strong Christian faith, and in the magazine we get the echoes and feel some of the power of those who make a strong Christian life possible."

"What a relief to disengage ourselves at times from all our surroundings and have our hearts warmed again with the sense of Christian fellowship! For this is what one misses more than everything else on the foreign field."

"There is very little Christian fellowship with others possible. This is just the sort of place where this magazine is of much value."

After reading your church paper or other religious papers, will you not send it on to some missionary in your own denomination?

[And now that you are through with this book, if you have no further use for it, will you not forward it to some worker in the Philippines where these lessons will be studied next year, or in Korea, for their course two years hence? You can obtain the address of such missionaries by writing to Dr. Samuel D. Price, Superintendent of the Surplus Material Department of the World's Sunday School Association, 216 Metropolitan Tower, New York City. Give the name of your denomination ("North" or "South," if there are two divisions), and enclose a stamp for reply.]

For Bible Class Discussion

1. The habit of church going. The Pilgrim Fathers braved the dangers of an untried ocean for the sake of freedom to worship God. Some of their descendants will not brave the discomfort of an April shower for the sake of the privilege of worshiping him. See Chapter III of Reality in Religion, by Willard J. Sperry.

2. Why do not the masses throng the churches? Who goes to church and why? See Chapter X of Reality in Religion, by Willard J. Sperry.

3. Sincere worship. See Chapter XI of Reality in Religion, by Willard J. Sperry.

4. Training children in public worship.

5. Worship as a unifying force. See Religious Education, October, 1925.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. What does the Gospel of Matthew have in common with the other two Synoptic Gospels? 2. Why is the gencalogy of Jesus given as that of Joseph? 3. Describe the situation in Palestine at the birth of Jesus. 4. Mention all the facts in the Gospels told about Jesus before his public ministry. 5. Describe the education of a Jewish lad.

TOPIC FOR INTERMEDIATES AND SENIORS
TAKING A REAL PART IN WORSHIP

Beginning the Lesson

Luke tells us that it was Jesus' custom to attend the services in the synagogue every Sabbath (Lk. 4.16), and the only story we have about him as a Boy is of his going with his parents to attend the services in the temple at Jerusalem. What is the beautiful story? "Know ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" are words for us to treasure.

On that first visit to Jerusalem we may think of Jesus as joining with the other pilgrims in singing the words of the Psalm which we study today, for it was one of those sung on such occasions. How does it begin? (Continue with Explanations and Comments.)

We Need the Church for Worship

You can worship God any time and anywhere; but unless you learn to worship

him some time and somewhere you will not be able to worship him anywhere and at any time.

I remember an old apple tree in father's orchard back in York State. We boys came home from school one afternoon after a raging storm had swept over the countryside, and we saw to our dismay that half of that greening apple tree had been wrenched from the parent stalk and thrown over by the roadside. We looked upon that half of the greening tree and we said one to another, "What a pity!" As the summer passed what was our amazement to find that the apples on the branch that had been thrown out by the roadside ripened day by day along with the apples that hung on the branches of the parent stalk, which was rooted deep away down in the subsoil. And when the time was fully come, from the branch torn asunder we took the apples, good, like for like as good as the apples we took from the parent stalk, which was rooted deep down in the subsoil. But that is not to say that year after year you can grow greening apples from a bough that has been cast over the fence; for next spring came and there was no promise of fruitage, while on the parent stalk, rooted down into the subsoil beneath, again there was the promise and presently the fulfillment, of the service for which the tree stood in the orchard.

Singing Boys Della Robbia

Oh, there be those who, outside of the organization of the church, have taken the message of the prophets and the message of Jesus, and have proclaimed it. But that is not to say that from one generation to another you can propagate the Kingdom of God apart from that life of faith and fellowship that grips itself in communion with the eternal Father through the Gospel of Jesus.

We need the meeting house; we need the builded institution for the worship of God, for discipline in the things of the Spirit, for the unveiling of the purposes of God's life in man upon the earth.—Rockwell H. Potter.

What Church Services Do for Us

"Why should I go to church?" a young girl asked her grandfather.

The grandfather was silent a moment, and then he said: "Tell me, child, has the piano-tuner been here yet? you said that the piano needed tuning."

"No, I am still waiting for him, the piano needs tuning sadly. I tried to play last evening, but my playing was a dismal failure."

"Now see, my child, our souls are like a musical instrument," then said the grandfather. "The strings become slack and out of tune very quickly, they must be tuned up from time to time."

"What do you mean, grandfather?"

"All strings—goodness, faith, courage, generosity, reverence, love—all grow less vibrant in us, without our knowing it even. But when we hear the Gospel pro-

claimed at church we see how we have lost tune. We are tuned up once more to what is the true pitch of righteousness. But the tuning does not last. And so one must go regularly to church to have one's soul tuned aright."

How to Get Help from the Church Services

This is one of the most important practical questions in Christian life. It is quite possible to attend the church services even with commendable regularity and yet receive but little spiritual profit. There is no holy atmosphere in the house of God, no heavenly ozone that is necessarily medicinal or tonic to our souls. There is no filtration of grace into our lives that goes on without agency of our own while we sit in our soft pews in the sanctuary with shut hearts and dream through a service. Forms of worship, whether plain or elaborate, are empty without the sincere homage and faith of loving hearts. They carry up to God just what we put into them; they bring to us from God just what with prayer and faith we draw out of them.

To make this talk as helpful as possible to young Christians, a few definite practical suggestions are offered.

To begin with, thoughtful preparation for the church services will greatly increase their profitableness to those who engage in them. The very best ordinary preparation is a season of private devotion before going to the house of God. The heart is thus cleansed of its worldly thoughts, is opened and warmed toward God, and is in a suitable condition to enter sincerely and earnestly into the public worship.

A reverent approach toward and entrance into God's house are further aids to blessing in the services. We should at least remember that we are going to meet God, and should know and consider well on what errand we are going to meet him—to worship him and receive help for our own lives, if we have any real errand at all—and should have our expectations aroused in anticipation of the communion with God and his people which we are soon to enjoy, and our hearts eager with desire for the holy meeting. Many persons enter God's house with as little thoughtfulness and seriousness as if it were a concert or a literary entertainment they had come to hear. Such persons are not prepared either to render acceptable worship or to receive needed help in the service. God must be in the heart, or we shall not see God in the exercises of worship. We shall never find in the sanctuary that which we do not seek and want to find.

Another condition of help is earnest personal interest in each part of the service. There is no blessing in our being merely among true worshipers and in the presence of God. A throng was close around Christ one day, but one only of them all was healed; and she was healed because she reached out her trembling finger and in faith touched the hem of Christ's garment. The multitude thronged, but only one touched him. This history may be repeated any Sabbath in any congregation. Suppose the minister is a little dull and the service a little wearisome; yet is not God present? And the blessing is not in the minister nor in the service, but in God himself, who is ready always to dispense to the tired and the hungry the rest and the bread they crave. Then after the service we should go away thoughtfully and reverently as we came. The custom which prevails in some churches of lingering a moment in silent prayer after the benediction is very impressive. Let the last minute be spent looking into God's face for a parting benediction.

From the church back again to the closet whence we set out is the best walk to take after the service has closed. A few moments of secret prayer will carry the blessings of the sanctuary so deep into our hearts that thereafter they will be part of our very life.

A special word may fitly be spoken of the Lord's Supper and of the way in which we may get help from it. That which sets it apart from other services is that it is a memorial feast appointed by Christ himself in which our thought and faith are helped by visible elements which represent to us the great spiritual facts of our redemption. The help this service gives is not different from that received from other ordinances, unless it be that the use of the visible symbols brings Christ and his sacrificial work more vividly before our dull eyes than where words only are used to picture the same truths. In this sense it is a greater aid to faith than a sermon or a hymn; but, as in all worship, so in the communion: the blessing comes, not from the ordinance itself, but from Christ.

How, then, can we get from the Lord's Supper the help which it has to give? Only by finding the way to Christ and submitting our hearts to the tender influences of his love as exhibited in symbol in the external rite. The Lord's Supper is a

memorial; we should remember Christ as we come to his table. It is a memorial especially of our Lord's suffering and death: we should recall his humiliation, his obedience, his agonies, his crucifixion, and think of the love that led him voluntarily to make himself an offering for sin. But memories alone will not bless us: there must be appropriating faith. "Broken for you," said the Master; "Broken for me," should be faith's answer.—Condensed from The Church and its Services, by J. R. Miller.

Joining in the Songs

"Hosanna to the Son of David!" That is what the boys sang in the temple after Jesus had made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Was that worship? Jesus thought so. He said that he regarded it as the perfection of worship.

Every boy was singing joyously, with all his heart in the song. Their hearts had been stirred by that splendid procession, by the stories they had heard about Jesus, by the sight of Jesus himself. They were in earnest, they sang because they wanted to sing.

Their singing was praise. It was a greeting and a welcome, and an expression of admiration, a recognition of Jesus' worth and royalty, an act of homage. In all true worship there is praise, gratitude for God's goodness and mercy; there is recognition of his greatness and majesty; there is homage, a bowing before One who is infinitely great. A writer compares the song of the Christian congregation to the singing of the anthem into the air by the bells in the tower of Antwerp Cathedral. There are all kinds of notes; the deep notes of the great bells which made the anthem roll through the air with the intonations of thunder; the notes of the little bells pealing out the same anthem on a higher key; and notes that are fine and sweet and small as a bird's warble, which fill the air with crisp tinklings and are as distinct as the louder notes of the great bells. "All have their individuality, and all are needed to make perfect the anthem which enchants the listener. In the Christian church Christ wants to hear the songs sung by the mature and deep voices of men and women, but he wants to hear at the same time the higher-keyed voices of the boys and girls."

Taking a Real Part in Worship

Glad in the house of God,
  Upon his holy day,
We lift our hearts in song,
  His wondrous praises say;
And while we sing, he hears,
  And when the song is done,
Oh, very, very near he seems
  To every listening one.

Low in the House of God
  Upon his peaceful day,
With bended heads we kneel
  Our earnest prayers to say;
And while we pray, he hears,
  And close, so close he comes,
That all the way he walks with us
  Back to our happy homes.—Nancy Byrid Turner.

Sentence Sermons

It is a great testimony to Jesus, the simple going to church in our own town or city or village: fall in, and keep it up!—John McNeill.

O Master, deign this church to bless,
This house of prayer, this home of rest,
And let its door a gateway be
To lead us from ourselves to thee.—Whittier.

Questions for Pupils to Look Up or Think About for the Next Lesson

1. When and where was Jesus born? 2. What beautiful story about the birth of Jesus did we study two weeks ago? 3. In what Gospel is it told? 4. Which visit to the Christ child occurred first, that of the angels or of the wise men? 5. Who was Matthew?